

**Superconvergence in Academic Libraries: an Exploration of Communication,
Changing Roles, Conflict and Collaboration**

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to investigate superconvergence in academic libraries from a grass roots perspective of the staff responsible for delivering the service.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the research is to build on existing literature, extending the knowledge of current practice in the UK which, until recently, has mainly focused on convergence between IT and the library and from a management perspective. The objectives are to identify key considerations for superconvergence in academic libraries; to critically evaluate current theory on the subject and to explore current practice.

Methods

A mixed methods approach was chosen using a survey and a case study. An online survey was used to identify trends in current practice and some broad perspectives, whilst face-to-face interviews enabled more in-depth exploration. A UK wide a priori sample of university information services incorporating multiple services was chosen. Out of 15 institutions contacted, seven chose to participate in the survey with one institution agreeing to serve as a case study.

Results

The key considerations for superconvergence in academic libraries emerging from the literature included communication, changing roles, conflict, work-related stress and collaboration. Results showed a plethora of practice and varying degrees of success in superconverged organisations.

Conclusions

Superconvergence is a growing phenomenon in today's turbulent HE environment, and the research highlights the many factors to consider in superconvergence projects and the implications for grass roots staff delivering the service.

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

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STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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Abbreviations

BOS	Bristol Online Surveys
CoP	Community of Practice
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HoS	Head of Service
IL	Information literacy
IP	Intellectual property
JISC	Joint Information Services Commission
L&T	Learning and teaching
LISA	Library and Information Abstracts
LISTA	Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
TNE	Transnational Education
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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NB: Harvard APA style referencing has been used throughout

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Background

University libraries have long played a major part in the learning, teaching and research activities of their parent organisation, but there has been a lengthy period of change and growth over the past two decades, brought about by a number of drivers:

Rapid expansion of Higher Education

Initiatives to increase distance learning courses and internationalisation have gained pace and academic libraries have had to quickly evolve to keep up with these new developments, particularly in the areas of student support, and access to and provision of resource materials (Sampson, 2003, p.106 and Jackson, 2005, p.198). Incorporating internationalisation on a grand scale has changed the nature of the student body. Statistics from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) show that in 2013/14, the number of international student numbers was 435,500; an increase of 3% on the previous year (www.ukcisa.org). Transnational education (TNE) in which students take their courses in a different country from the awarding institution accounted for a further 253,695 students in 2014 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills). Government imperatives to push lifelong learning and widening participation are also helping to swell the number of non-traditional students entering higher education in one form or another; causing major resourcing implications.

Student expectations and behaviour

Studies on undergraduate user needs suggest that students have great expectations of their university library; they “expect customization, they are technology veterans and they utilize new communication modes” (Gardner & Eng, 2005, p.410). Neal (2009, p.466) states that they want “web based services with no lines and no limits on hours” coupled with help at the point of need; whatever time that may be. Despite a wealth of good quality electronic resources being provided by the library,

research shows the majority of students are more comfortable and confident in going to the Internet first for information (Dutton, Helsper & Gerber, 2009, p.14. and Peters, Hathaway & Bragan-Turner, 2003, p.79). Toner (2008, p.21) purports that the main reasons for this are: lack of awareness about resources, a perceived lack of relevance and lack of time. Brophy (2007) terms this lack of engagement as 'disintermediation' and coupled with students using "satisficing behaviour"; a strategy in which they keep exploration to a minimum and aim to complete tasks with the least possible effort, is a real challenge for higher education (HE) (Prabha, Silipigni, Olszewski, & Jenkins, 2007, p.2). Another recent phenomenon has aggravated the situation even further; that of the increasing focus on the marketing of universities as addressing consumer needs rather than learner needs causing students to "seek to have a degree, rather than be learners" (Molesworth, Nixon & Scullion, 2009, p.277).

Increasing emphasis on teaching and learning

The Follet Report (Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group, 1993) recognised that library staff were in a position to impact directly on teaching and learning but lack of training and development was a major challenge to this notion. The Fielden Report (1993) was commissioned to examine human resource issues in academic libraries and made some predictions on the future of subject librarianship, including that the role they performed would evolve from subject-based collection development to subject-based user support. This prediction has gradually come to fruition as the subject librarian's role is now characterised by "pedagogical knowledge, which identifies the subject librarian with the teaching function of academics and supports an educational system based on teaching generic skills" (Gaston, 2001, p.35).

Economic challenges

In 1993, the Follett Report reported a reduction in library funding and the rising cost of library materials beyond the rate of inflation. Economic challenges have persisted

since then and the more recent worldwide economic downturn, coupled with higher education funding reforms, has left university libraries increasingly having to operate on reduced budgets. A 2010 study by Nicholas, Rowlands, Jubb and Jamali (p.377) reported that 35% of UK university libraries had faced major cuts, 36% received funding similar to previous years and 29% actually saw an improvement in funding. This improvement arguably was the result of libraries aiming to increase student satisfaction with library services and resources. With many academic libraries facing budget freezes or cuts, reductions in the workforce are inevitable. In 2009, Nicholas et al, reported that over 72% of UK academic libraries anticipated making cuts in staffing (p.380) and by 2011, Harper and Corral, reporting on the effects of the economic downturn in the UK on academic libraries, highlighted that this had become a reality, with human resources being targeted across the sector (p.96). Moropa (2010, p.382) purports that a library's position is volatile "since it stands with one leg in the education sector and one in the ICT sector" and it has become apparent that one of the ways universities have achieved this reduction in staffing is by flattening the organisational structure and/or carrying out convergence projects in which departments such as the library and IT along with other student facing services are brought together into one entity.

Reviews of higher education

Three reviews of higher education in the 1990s, arguably, were responsible for developing this trend towards convergence:

- The Fielden Report (1993, para.312) in which it was predicted that a "move towards greater operational convergence will be universal in some functions", including integrated library and IT service strategic planning, networked services and information literacy teaching and front line enquiry services.
- The Follet Report which charged academic libraries with making the changes necessary to meet the information needs of all users and led to a large scale programme of change and renewal across the sector.

- The Dearing Report (National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education, 1997) which made recommendations on how HE institutions should develop to meet the needs of the UK over the next 20 years. Dolton, Greenaway and Vignoles, (1997, p.725) writing in response to the report, stressed that the present system of HE did not make the best use of its human capital and equipment including buildings resources, and the need to address this was overdue.

Convergence

Convergence, in its earliest form, during the 1990s, was mostly based around the model of combining the library and IT support and sometimes other departments, such as student support. The results of a questionnaire survey by Pugh, in 1997, suggested that around 50 universities and colleges had converged in this way, based upon a 70% response rate from 162 institutions. By 2005, Joint purported that this form of convergence had risen to 50% of UK academic libraries (2011, p.638).

Pugh (1997, p.50) defined convergence as:

The bringing together of the library and the computer service, possibly with other separate support services, under the management of an executive director whose major responsibility is for the management of the service.

However, according to Sykes and Gerrard (2009, p.67) convergence has become a relatively fluid concept and tends to be “defined either in a prescriptive manner of what should be, or a descriptive manner of what it appears to be”. They distinguish between formal convergence, which involves bringing together services for the purposes of streamlining management, and operational convergence, in which actual functions and services are merged (1994, p.68). Whichever model is adopted, convergence is seen as a way to exercise clear strategic direction, combine and utilise the budget more effectively and an opportunity to forge a common customer-focussed service ethos. The trend for convergence in the UK has been significant and

Joint (2011, p.643) suggests that there has been three phases: an early period of optimism and commitment, a period of reflection in which some organisations de-converged or “uncoupled” (Massis, 2011, p.88) and a recent newly energised focus on ‘superconvergence’, as coined by Heseltine et al (2009).

Superconvergence

Over the past decade the converged service model has developed to incorporate many aspects of student support. Shared services or superconvergence is the latest weapon in the armory of higher education institutions as they become more ambitious and innovative in finding ways to deal with a turbulent environment. In a 2008 US study on the nature of convergence and collaboration of campus information services, Hernon & Howell reported that institutions’ responses highlighted twelve broad categories on offer: institutional repositories, housing information commons, supporting disability services, offering satellite services such as improving student academic skills and tailoring course management software such as Blackboard (2008, p.9). Bulpitt (2012, p.2) suggests that the first experience of superconvergence dates from 2008, based on a case study of five institutions. In 2009, ten Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) service directors met to debate the latest trend for superconvergence and what these developments meant for organisational structures, staff roles, skills sets, service models and student expectations (Heseltine et al). According to Appleton (2010, p.67), superconvergence involves bringing together “either structurally, or physically, a range of services such as the library, IT support, student administration, careers, welfare, counselling, study skills, student finance and programme administration”. They result in information professionals and others types of specialists working together. A Joint Information Services Commission (JISC) briefing paper on shared services in 2008 (p.1), considers them as institutions cooperating in the development and delivery of services and adds to the number of benefits: “levering transformation” and the opportunity to collaborate with third party institutions. Bringing together these usually separate functions into “a student-facing entity” is a way of supporting students and staff in a more holistic manner (Weaver, 2010, p.2)

although Hanson goes further in describing it as a “one-stop shop approach” based on convenience (2005, p.3).

Drivers for convergence/superconvergence

The circumstances which cause an organisation to converge are complex and specific to the institution, however, a recurring theme throughout the literature is that superconvergence is usually driven by management and instigated top-down as opposed to being organic; sometimes more from the personality of an individual driving it (Hwang, 2007 p.542). According to Hanson, it is due to the forward-thinking of vice-chancellors or principals, after the Follet and Fielden reports, that convergence is so prevalent in the UK (2005, p.2). In his 1997 survey, Pugh (p.56) stated that 52% of respondents reported that the proposal to converge came from senior management in the institution, with a further percentage reporting it came from senior management acting with other areas. Field worked on separating out the underlying factors most commonly cited as determinants of convergence within the higher education sector and categorised them into three areas: “those which are truly universal; those which are particularly relevant within the United Kingdom and those which apply at mainly institutional level” (2001, p.274). Melling (2013, p.6) describes the overarching drivers and enablers of superconvergence as being: institutional mission, simplification of services, library space redesign and the wider economic environment. Hanson (2005, p.8) adds to the list, the requirement by the Higher Education Funding Council for Britain (HEFCE) that all institutions have an information strategy and should create a “single technical infrastructure to underpin all information needs” in a seamless fashion. Yet another driver, according to Hanson (2005, p.16), is the need for conformity with a national framework for quality assurance and accountability, both of which place an emphasis on technical infrastructure and resources. A SCONUL think tank described other drivers such as: organisational politics, shrinking senior management, retirement of key staff leading to new opportunities and a balancing of power between support and academic areas (Heseltine et al, 2009, p.121). Retirement of key staff either in computing or the library appears to have been an important driver for convergence in a number of

institutions, as they took the opportunity to restructure (Russell, 1998, p.81; Davis, 1998, p.111; Hopkins, 2005, p.20 & Shoebridge, 2005, p.30). Field (2005, p.15) concludes that the natural outcome of this is to have these services directed by a "single set of professional hands" and, according to Field (in Hanson, 2005, p.13), the majority of the appointments for heads of service were 5:1 in favour of librarians. Whatever the drivers for convergence are in an organisation, it is the case that significant organisational and operational change is necessary in order to achieve it.

Organisational change

Writers in the field of change management concur that change is a good thing; organisations should be fluid entities, as the opposite of this is stagnation (Kotter, 1996; Kanter et al, 1992). The kind of change required to bring about superconvergence tends to be transformational change or "big C" meaning a complete change in character, rather than small and incremental which is more evolutionary and less problematical (Kanter et al, 1992, p.11). In periods of organisational change, stress can result from the creation of new positions, a greater need for cooperation across the organisation and issues around power sharing (Hage & Aiken, 1970, p.101). Organisational culture also has to be considered when implementing change. According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2010, p.111), organisational culture can be thought of as the "personality of an organization". It is concerned with how things are conducted on a daily basis, how employees work and how they relate to each other, customers and their managers. Superconvergence results in bringing together tribes of often disparate working practices and cultures with a significant variation along the "continuum of staff resources, from the generalist collaborator, or flexible well-trained professional at one end, to the pigeon-holed staff or professional specialist (back office consultants or strict subject specialists or bibliographers) at the other" (Bailey and Tierney 2002, p.10). Therefore, convergence, by its very nature, is contentious and can cause a number of problems for individuals, team-based structures and management. In 1978, Lynch discussed how academic libraries have traditionally operated as bureaucracies making change hard to achieve and a culture of bureaucratic management has the

effect of stifling individual effort, encourages people to stay within their comfort zones and fosters a sense of complacency (Kotter, p.4). It follows then, that change of the “big C” type will probably have a significant negative impact on the emotions of the workforce and without their cooperation, change will fail.

There is an agreement in change management literature that taking into account the opinions of the recipients of change has a beneficial effect on the change process and Vroom (1964, p.115) points out that there is a significant correlation between job satisfaction and the “degree to which subordinates are able to take part in the decision-making process”. Back in 1997, during early convergence attempts, Pugh reported that 75% of staff had no significant influence on the convergence proposal and 82% of respondents considered that convergence process was marked by procedures which were planned, implemented and controlled by institutional or service management.

For convergence to be perceived as effective, Pugh (p.51) reported that there are three critical factors to consider:

- evidence of a high degree of convergence embracing administrative, managerial, operational, technical and physical convergence
- boundary spanning structures
- a high degree of team development

Additionally, it was considered vital

- to reflect the diversity of the sector
- to examine the possibility that convergence could be delivered through voluntary arrangements

Benefits of superconvergence

A SCONUL Shared Service Report (2009) found that 89% of respondents were open to any innovations which would deliver perceived benefits. There is much in the literature on the benefits of shared services and they have been synthesised in the JISC Toolkit on Shared Services (2009) as:

- continuity and resilience of service
- raising quality and adding value to existing services
- securing cost savings and sustainable efficiencies
- releasing staff time for more customer-facing activities
- improving the scalability of systems
- ensuring improved and more up-to-date systems
- gaining competitive advantage
- ability to offer otherwise unsustainable service

Joint (2011) conducted a narrative account of attempts to converge library and IT departments along with other support services. He analysed a number of case studies and concluded that organisations are moving from initial exploration to a “mature period of well-informed achievement”.

Summary

Superconvergence (following on from a long period of convergence) has been a phenomenon which has developed in recent years, involving a significant change in how academic libraries are managed, funded and staffed. Most superconvergence comes out of a top-down directive aimed at saving money and a (usually secondary) desire to join together different departments to further the shared mission of supporting teaching, learning and enquiry. Superconvergence often brings together IT and library services, study support, learning technologies, research support and other departments such as career support; however this is not exhaustive and there are many different versions of superconvergence. Superconverged services have tended to be brought together under the auspices of an existing library director or equivalent, merging established teams, often into a shared building. This kind of change management has the potential to negatively impact the workforce and cause resistance to change. Care needs to be taken around issues of communication, staff involvement, training and development and job design (Farley, Broady-Preston & Hayward, 1998, p.242). Some literature has begun to emerge on the subject of superconvergence; the ‘how it was done’, and some benefits and challenges from a

more senior perspective. However; there is a gap in the literature on how superconvergence truly works for individuals and teams at the level of service delivery.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The overall aim of the research is to investigate, at grass roots level, the experiences of staff in superconverged academic library services, in relation to communication, changing roles, conflict, workplace stress and collaboration. The purpose of the research is twofold; to conduct a literature review on the history and current context of superconvergence in academic libraries in the UK, and to collect and analyse empirical data regarding superconvergence in the UK.

In order to achieve this aim, the objectives will be to:

1. Establish the historical development and current context of superconvergence in academic libraries
2. Identify key themes for superconvergence in academic libraries in relation to:
 - Theories of change management and communication in organisations
 - Conflict in academic libraries
 - Collaborative practice in academic libraries
3. Explore what staff in superconverged organisations are actually experiencing in relation to communication, changing roles, conflict, workplace stress and collaboration

Objectives 1 and 2 will present the view of the current literature, whilst objective 3 will add to the research in the field of superconvergence in academic libraries.

The volatile nature of the higher education landscape, combined with changes in funding, makes this timely research. This study will further develop the field of research into the phenomena of superconvergence and how it is currently undertaken.

1.3 Structure

The methodology is outlined in Chapter two, followed by thematically arranged chapters on: Communication, Changing roles of staff in academic libraries, Conflict and other workplace stress and Collaboration.

The following chapter discusses the chosen methodology for the research and explains the rationale for the thematic structure of the literature, results and discussion.

Chapter Two - Methodology

This chapter puts forward the rationale for the methodology used in the research project; it outlines the research approach, the strategy of enquiry, and the research methods chosen. It validates the reasons for a mixed methods approach (2.1), with using survey and case study strategies (2.2) employing a literature review, questionnaire and interviews as the research methods (2.4). This chapter also explains the data analysis for the research (2.5), discusses ethical considerations (2.6) and limitations of the research.

2.1 Research approach

Researchers frequently debate the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research focuses on quantification in the collection and analysis of data; entails a deductive approach, incorporates positivism and embodies a view of social reality as an external, objective reality (Bryman, 2008, p.36). Quantitative research is based on starting with a theoretical framework established from the literature review in which a hypothesis will emerge and the variables can be tested against (Pickard, 2007, p.18). This method is more suited to the collection of data in numeric form and is useful for relatively large scale and representative sets of data for the purposes of comparison; however, Pickard (2008, pp.21-22) puts forward a number of issues to be considered including:

- internal validity – ensuring that when a causal relationship is discovered, it is definitely linked to the variable being investigated
- external validity - ensuring the sample used is representative of the wider population being studied
- reliability – ensuring consistency in findings over time and across location
- objectivity – ensuring the findings are not a result of the researcher's own interpretations

In contrast, qualitative research, according to Bryman (2008, p.36) focuses on words rather than numbers; advocating an inductive approach to generate theories from

the research, therefore it is more exploratory in nature. It rejects the notion of positivism, emphasises the role of the individual in interpreting their own social world and posits that social reality is constantly shifting. With qualitative research, establishing trust in the findings is vital and certain issues must be addressed (Pickard, 2008, pp.20-21):

- credibility – ensuring that a number of techniques are used to limit subjectivity and establish triangulation
- transferability – the extent to which the results can be applied to a similar context
- dependability – ensuring the research process has an audit trail which can be validated by an external
- confirmability – ensuring that the results can be traced back to the raw data

As the debate continues over the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative research, many researchers of the discipline draw the conclusion that a mixed methods approach may be a way of capitalising on the various strengths of each type, whilst off-setting the weaknesses (Bryman, 2008, p.628).

The research on superconvergence uses a mixed methods approach by combining quantitative methods to gain comparative data across the HE sector and qualitative methods to gain a more detailed perspective.

2.2 Strategy of enquiry

This research uses a survey strategy for “structuring the collection and analysis of standardized information from a defined population using a representative of that sample” (Pickard, 2007, p.95). Quantitative strategies, such as this, focus on analysis of broader data sets and will help to identify trends occurring in superconverged academic libraries. Surveys are considered a useful methodology to examine a number of case studies and for exploratory analysis (Powell & Connaway, 2004, p.84). For the purposes of this study an online survey was the main instrument used.

Qualitative strategies involve more in-depth analysis over a smaller data set. In order to investigate the complex nature of superconvergence in academic libraries, a case

study was employed to further explore some of the themes emerging from the literature review and online survey. Case study research is associated with a specific location, group or community and is concerned with the detailed examination of the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman, 2008, p.66).

2.3 Sampling

A priori purposive sampling establishes a framework before sampling begins and is useful in providing structure, as well as setting initial boundaries in the sample (Pickard, 2007, p.64). A priori sampling criteria using the SCONUL 2012-13 Annual Report was used to indicate which HE institutions have an information service combining the library with several other services, but not necessarily IT (Appendix 1). The literature on converged services was also used to target organisations which had written about their convergence experience and may be receptive to taking part in the study.

2.4 Research methodology

Triangulation refers to the view that “quantitative and qualitative research might be combined to triangulate findings, in order that they may be mutually corroborated” (Bryman, 2008, p.633). A triangulation of collection methods was used with each method explained in turn below.

2.4.1 Literature Review

An ongoing literature review was conducted throughout the study as a way of investigating the existing literature and consolidating it with the researcher’s knowledge. The literature search was broken down into stages as advised by Hart (2001, p.23):

- Defining the topic
- Limiting the topic
- Identifying the main reference tools to be used
- Housekeeping
- Planning the searches

In addition to the core works on convergence by Hanson (2005), Pugh (1997) and Melling and Weaver (2013), the OPACs of Aberystwyth University and The University of Northampton were used, as well as COPAC. Literature searches were completed in Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA) and Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) as well as the discovery service Primo at Aberystwyth and Northampton universities. Zetoc alerts with the British Library were also set up to ensure that newly published research was included. The search strategy incorporated the use of a grid to record search strings. Row A in Figure 1 highlights some of the primary search terms used, with synonyms listed below. The benefit to using a grid method is that the researcher can systematically use a set of search terms by combining them into a search string and strategically mining each resource. The use of the wildcard character is used in academic librar* to ensure that all possible endings are taken into consideration and the Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT were used to combine searches, extend searches or rule out certain results coming back. As the research took an inductive approach, more search terms were added as new themes emerged from the literature. The inductive approach to the literature review followed some of the strategies advised by Ridley (2012) of snowballing from author and citation trails to discover more research. Many of the initially sourced books and journal articles found in the databases included references to other useful works.

A	university	academic librar*	superconvergence	conflict	collaboration
B	"higher education"	"academic library"	convergence	"role conflict"	communities of practice
C	HE	"university library"	super-convergence		CoPs
D	university	librar*	one-stop		teamwork
E			"shared services"		"cross- disciplinary teams"
F			"student services"		
G			merged		

Figure 1

All sources of literature were recorded on a card index system with critically evaluative notes added on their potential usefulness to the study, as advised by Pickard (2007, P.29).

Once synthesised, the review highlighted the literature on convergence and superconvergence has been mainly practitioner; written on the 'how it worked' in case studies, and some benefits and challenges from a more senior perspective. However, there is a gap in the literature on how it truly works for individuals and teams at grass roots level who have to deliver the service. This provided the impetus for further research to widen the knowledge base about superconvergence in the UK.

2.4.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was chosen to gain a snapshot of what is happening across the HE sector. Some of the advantages to using questionnaires are being able to reach large sections of the population geographically at a relatively low cost, anonymity as well as confidentiality, and data analysis can be determined from the outset (Pickard, 2007, p183).

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was developed in order to further examine some of the themes that were forthcoming from the literature review. It was created in Bristol Online Surveys and disseminated as an online survey. This type of survey software has the benefit of the responses being automatically downloaded into a database, giving the researcher the ability to carry out functions such as cross-referencing of responses. The questionnaire made use of closed questions in order to gain comparative data and determine trends, and open questions which allowed respondents to answer on their own terms and highlight topics which may not have been contemplated by the researcher; advantageous in keeping with the inductive nature of the study (Bryman, 2008, p.247). The questionnaire was piloted by two specialists and a non-specialist outside the sample.

After establishing the most appropriate contact (through the researcher's existing contacts and the relevant websites), an email invitation to participate was sent to relevant heads of library services, with a detailed explanation of the research, a link to the survey and a request to disseminate to all staff (Appendix 3). It was felt that the study should be explained fully in the email text and consent gained at this point, so potential respondents could make an informed decision whether or not to click on the survey link (Appendix 4).

Questionnaires are a useful tool for comparative analysis, however there is a lack of opportunity to clarify and expand on issues (Pickard, 2007, p.200). Therefore, in order to further explore the issues in more depth, interviews were used to build on the themes from the survey.

2.4.3 Interviews

Kvale (1996) recommends a seven stage process for interviewing:

Thematizing:

Themes were established during the literature review and the questionnaire which would need further investigation.

Designing:

The interviews were designed in order to complement the structure of the questionnaire, prompting interviewees to reflect on previous responses and allow for deeper exploration of themes. Semi-structured interviews have a basic checklist to make sure all relevant topic areas are covered but give the freedom to explore, probe and ask different questions which have not been specified (Pickard, 2007, p.178). This approach was taken as the researcher did not want to miss opportunities to follow unexpected strands if they arose.

Interviewing:

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with a maximum of one hour scheduled for each. Before the interview, each participant was given a document revisiting the rationale for the study, a consent form (with the option to opt out at any point) and an interview schedule to refer to.

As the researcher had previously spent five years working with the case study organisation, a comfortable rapport existed between interviewer and interviewees which helped in terms of relaxation and being open with responses.

Transcribing

All interviews were recorded to ensure accurate transcription which enabled the researcher to focus on the conversation. Transcriptions were kept on a personal device accessible only to the researcher and transcribed with the help of dictation software. In accordance with the Aberystwyth University Ethical Review Committee (2007), these recordings were transferred to the researcher's personal computer to be kept for one year following submission, after which the recordings will be destroyed.

Analysing

The interview transcripts were coded and analysed thematically (see 2.6).

Verifying

Verification, according to Pickard (2007, p.178) is checking whether the interview answered the research questions and also if the researcher's interpretations are correct. The former question will be dealt with in 2.8 in terms of the limitations of

verifying and generalizing the data. The latter is not possible to check, as time constraints restricted the opportunity to revisit the interviewees.

Reporting

Verbatim quotes are necessary evidence and are used in the results and discussion of the research (Appendix 6).

2.5 Response rate

The head of each academic library was contacted and asked to disseminate a link to the research rationale and online survey to all staff not on the strategic management team. Pickard states that “sampling represents a trade-off between the desirable and attainable” (2007, p.59). The desire was to get responses from at least ten HE institutions and carry out focus groups in at least four; however a number of institutions did not respond and some of those which had written about convergence had surprisingly de-converged. 7 out of 15 institutions agreed to take part and the survey was also disseminated via LIS-LINK with a request to share with non-librarian colleagues. In the event, it transpired that professional librarians accounted for 44% of responses, but, there were no responses from people in career support, counselling or administration posts, as seen in Figure 2 below.

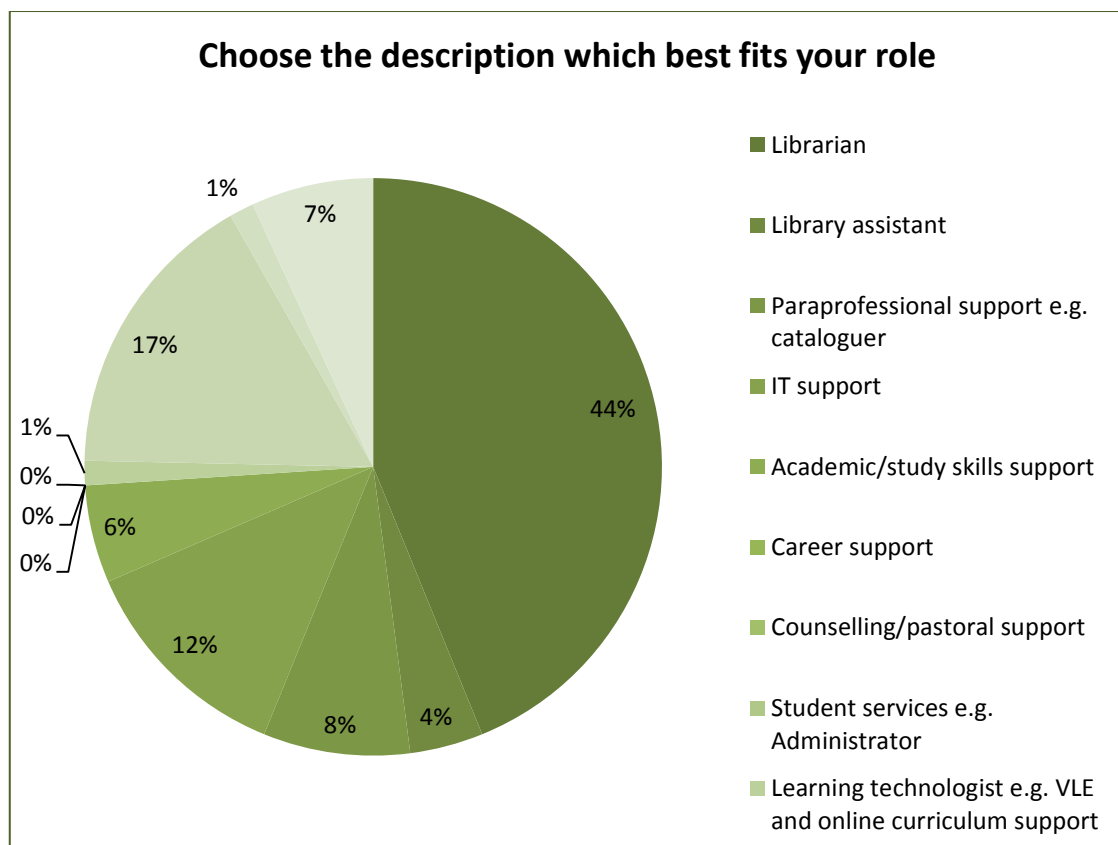


Figure 2

Take up of institutions agreeing to focus groups amounted to two, but staff on an individual level were not happy to take part due to worries over sharing thoughts which may cause them problems with management and peers (Appendix 5). The pragmatic decision was made to use one institution as a case study and for at least two members of staff in each service area to be interviewed, after an email went out from the head of service requesting participants across all teams. Snowball sampling, according to Pickard (2007, p.65) is used to make initial contact with key informants who will point to information-rich cases that have characteristics and issues that may need further enquiry, and, indeed, during initial interviews, names of colleagues were passed to the researcher in the knowledge that they may make a useful contribution to the study.

2.6 Data analysis

As Bristol Online Surveys was used for the questionnaire, most of the data was already in a usable format to identify trends and cross-tabulation of responses was

also available. The open ended questions were analysed using the same methods as for the interviews. Analysis of the interviews entailed transcribing from the recordings, followed by a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, according to Aronson (1995, p.1), focuses on identifiable themes and patterns across the data, which should be linked back to the literature if possible, therefore it was decided to synthesise the literature review and data analysis in chapters according to themes. Leininger (1985, p.60) describes themes as “components or fragments of ideas or experiences which are often meaningless when viewed alone” but once pieced together with the stories from the rest of the data set, begin to form a comprehensive picture of the collective experience. The identification of themes was inductive, as opposed to theoretical which is a useful method when investigating an under-researched area, or with participants whose views on the topic are not known (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.11).

The use of review tools in Microsoft Word, were used to code and annotate each interview transcript for themes and possible quotes for usage.

2.7 Ethics

Aberystwyth University research ethics guidelines for research involving human participants (Aberystwyth University Ethical Review Committee, 2007) were used throughout, and participation in the research was optional at all stages.

The nature of the research has implications, with some respondents feeling uncomfortable disclosing information about the organisation they work in; particularly in regard to negative feedback. A benefit to online surveys is that respondents may address sensitive issues anonymously; however, to protect confidentiality and maintain anonymity in the case study library, the individual participants are not named and quotations are marked with (S) to delineate from interviewees. Interview participants are referred to by the letter 'P' (participant) and a number from 1-15, e.g. P11, and every effort was made to remove any identifying comments.

Informed consent was sought for the online survey via an explanation in the text of the email invitation. The online survey data was protected by a secure login and did not ask for names or other information which would cause recognition to any individual or their organisation. Consent forms for the interviews (Appendix 7) explained the use of data; if at any time the participants decided not to be included, all their data would be destroyed and not used as part of the research.

2.8 Limitations

It should be noted that though the nature of the study warrants a quantitative strategy to identify trends across the HE sector, the small sample size of institutions responding to the survey, and the fact that a significant number of librarians, as opposed to other types of staff, responded, means that the data is not fully representative of superconverged services in the UK and, therefore, lacks external validity. This is further compounded by the pragmatic decision to use just one institution as a case study for interviews. However, the chosen methodology of survey and case study strategies is appropriate for a research project such as this in terms of theoretically corroborating the findings from both approaches (Bryman, 2008, p.635).

2.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the rationale for using a mixed methods approach, employing a survey of UK wide academic libraries, supported by a case study. A literature review, online survey and face-to-face interviews were the chosen research methods. The survey questionnaire and a sample interview schedule can be seen in Appendices 3 and 8.

The research is presented thematically; an approach taken to reflect the inductive nature of the study. The literature uncovered a number of themes to be considered regarding convergence and superconvergence and these were followed up and explored through the survey questionnaire and interviews. For this reason it is logical to present them in a cohesive manner. The following chapters, therefore, include literature results and discussion on the core themes of relevance to the research:

Communication (Chapter 3); Changing roles of staff in academic libraries (Chapter 4); Conflict and other workplace stress (Chapter 5) and Collaboration (Chapter 6).

Chapter Three - Communication

This chapter examines the concept of communication in organisations. It examines what makes good communication, reflects on how poor communication will impact on the workforce and examines the current landscape of communication in institutions with superconverged services.

Writers in organisational and communication theory concur that clear and consistent communication is essential, but even more so in a period of upheaval (Blundel, 2004, Kotter, 1999 Kanter, Stein & Jick, 1992). Koontz and Weihrich, in 1990, discussed how barriers and breakdowns in communication are a real problem for organisations; highlighting the need for managers to put good communication structures in place if the workforce is to feel informed, listened to and directed consistently. Poor communication is one of the major causes of organisational conflict. The two main goals of effective communication should be: to inform employees about the organisation, its policies and their tasks, and to create a community within the organisation (De Ridder in Elving, 2006, p.131).

Understanding the organisation's mission and vision is vital if the disparate teams across a superconverged service are going to be working cohesively towards the same goals. Question 3.1 of the survey asked respondents to rate how strongly they felt that they understood the mission, vision and objectives of the service and the response was mainly positive, however the responses were not so affirmative in question 3.2, which asked if they understood how their work contributed to the achievement of the service.

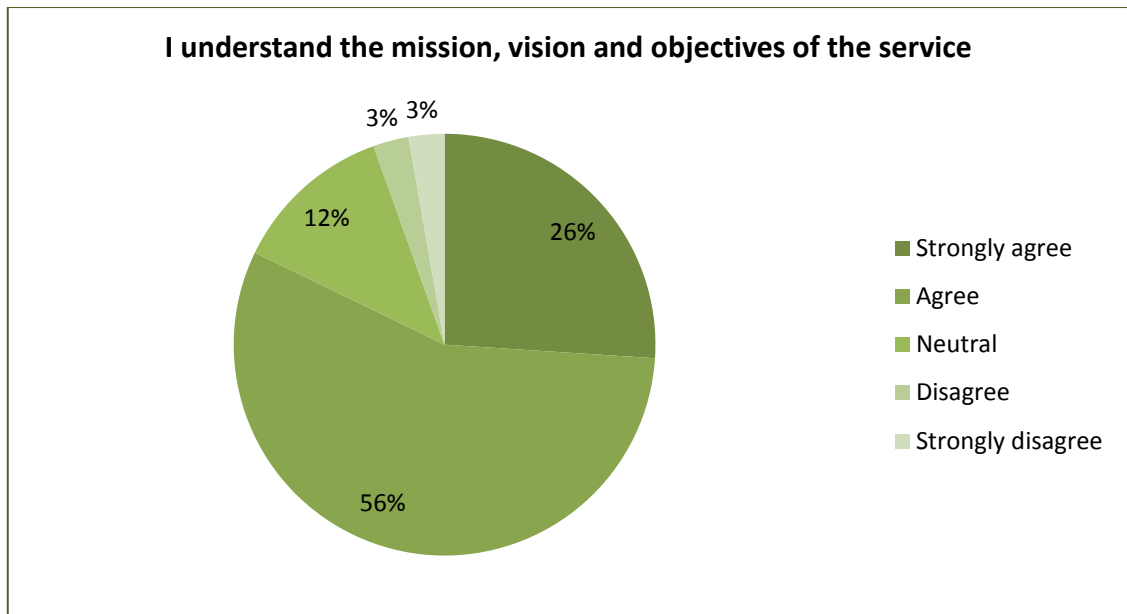


Figure 3

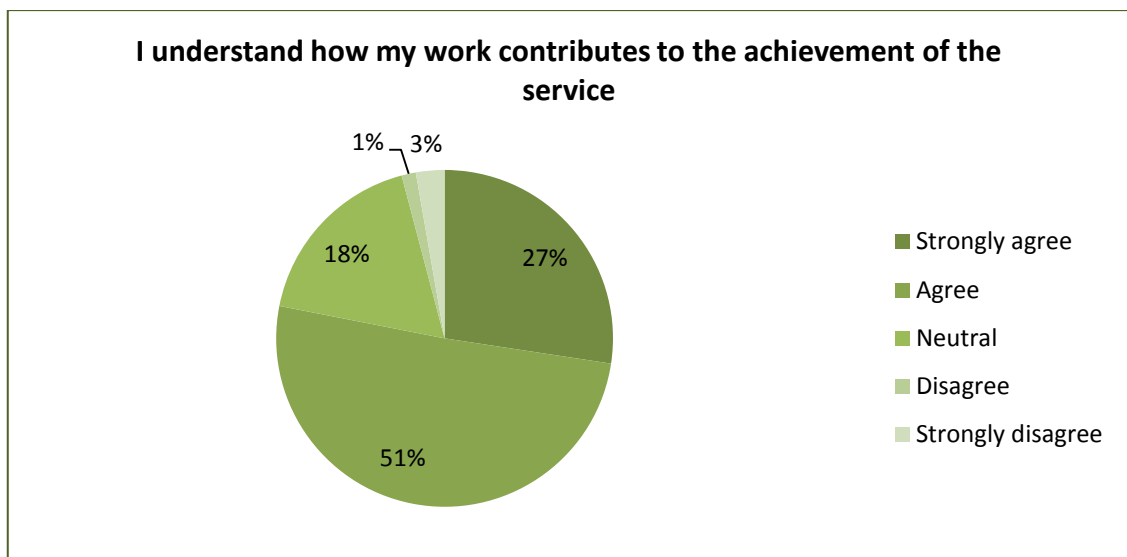


Figure 4

In order to explore the existing landscape of communication in converged services, questions 4.1-4.9 dealt with how effective current communication processes were at conveying certain types of information.

Question 4.1 asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of communication of strategic information; that which serves to turn the vision of the organisation into reality and give it a framework. Most of the responses rated the dissemination of this information as either very good or good (Figure 5). However, when it came to

question 4.2, based on senior management teams cascading down more operational decisions, the majority reported dissemination as being either average or below (Figure 6).

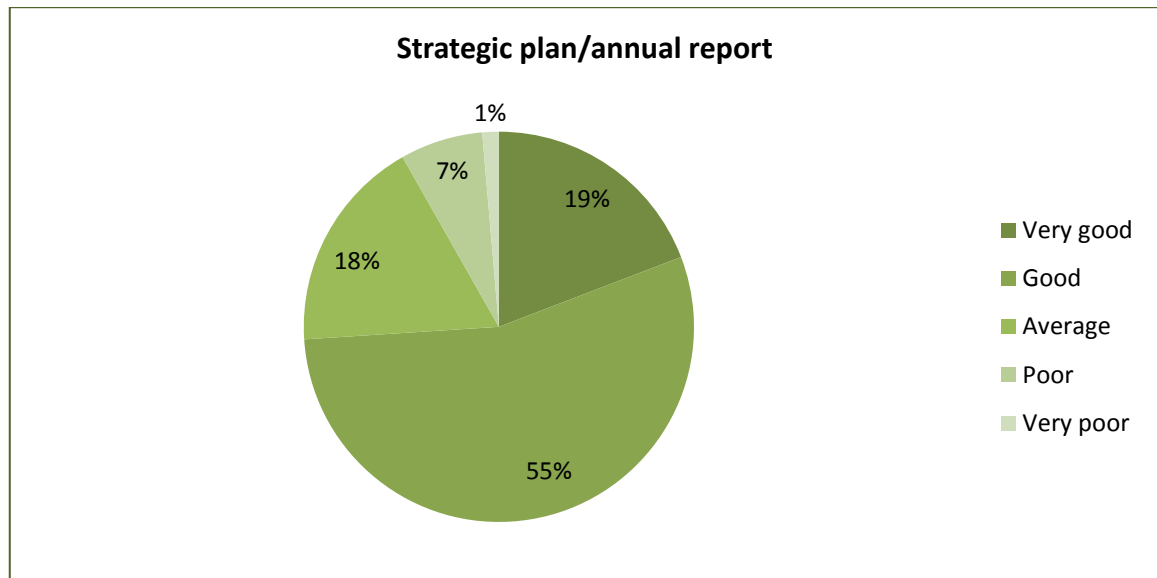


Figure 5

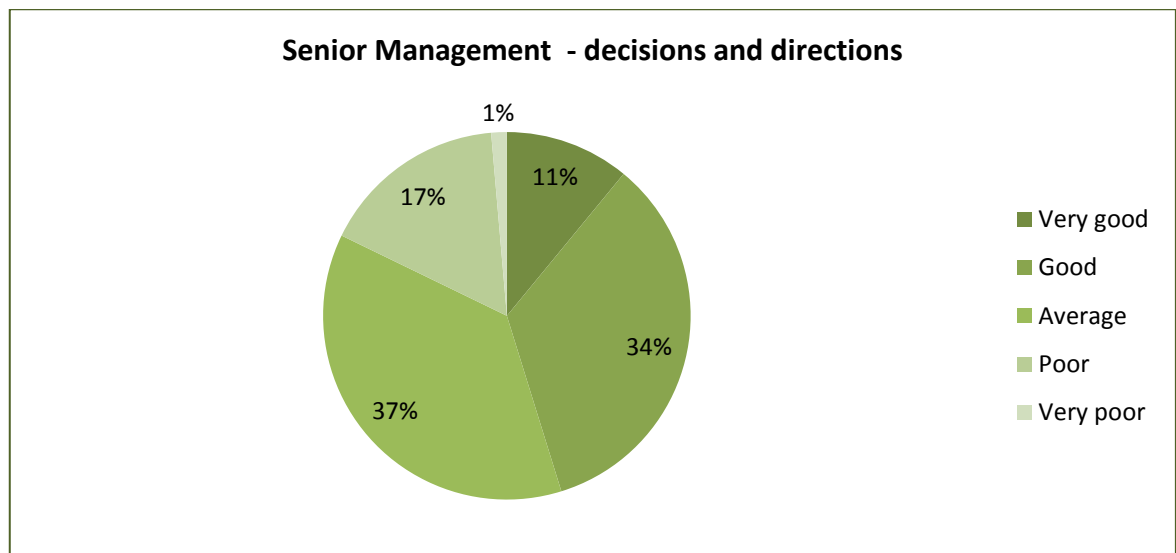


Figure 6

Further exploration in the interviews at the case study institution highlighted a different story; all participants were in agreement that top-down communication of this nature had been steadily improving since the restructure; most attributing this to the Head of Service (HoS) and the open and collegiate manner in which the service is operated. An internal communication research project had been undertaken in 2012,

which had resulted in recommendations for improvement. On the back of this review of communication, the HoS implemented a weekly email sent every Friday afternoon and all participants mentioned its value and usefulness:

“ Friday missive, as I like to call it, shows they’re absolutely in touch with what is going on so you don’t have to wait for minutes to come. You know immediately what’s been discussed and how it’s going to impact your work” (P3).

“I enjoy reading his updates, he has a way of communicating that makes you want to listen” (P5).

Questions 4.3 and 4.4 dealt with how effectively both individual and team responsibilities were disseminated and although both questions received a significant number of very good or good ratings, the results for team roles and responsibilities showed just over 38% felt it was average or below (Figure 7). Similarly, the responses for question 4.5 on policies and procedures resulted in nearly 40% rating as average or below (Figure 8), highlighting that the kind of information generated or used by middle managers or team leaders was not consistently communicated.

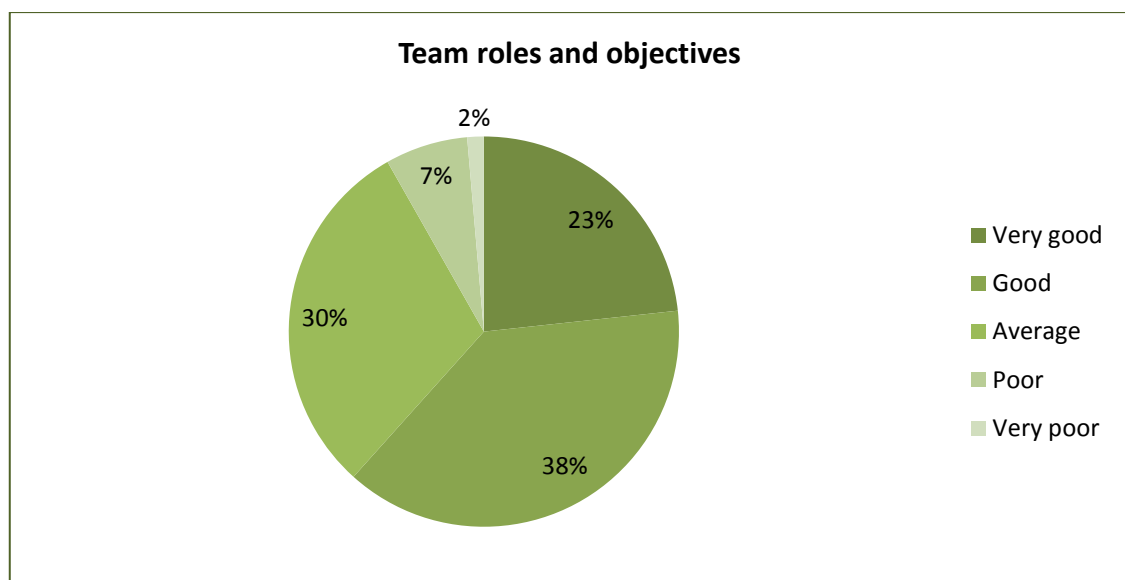


Figure 7

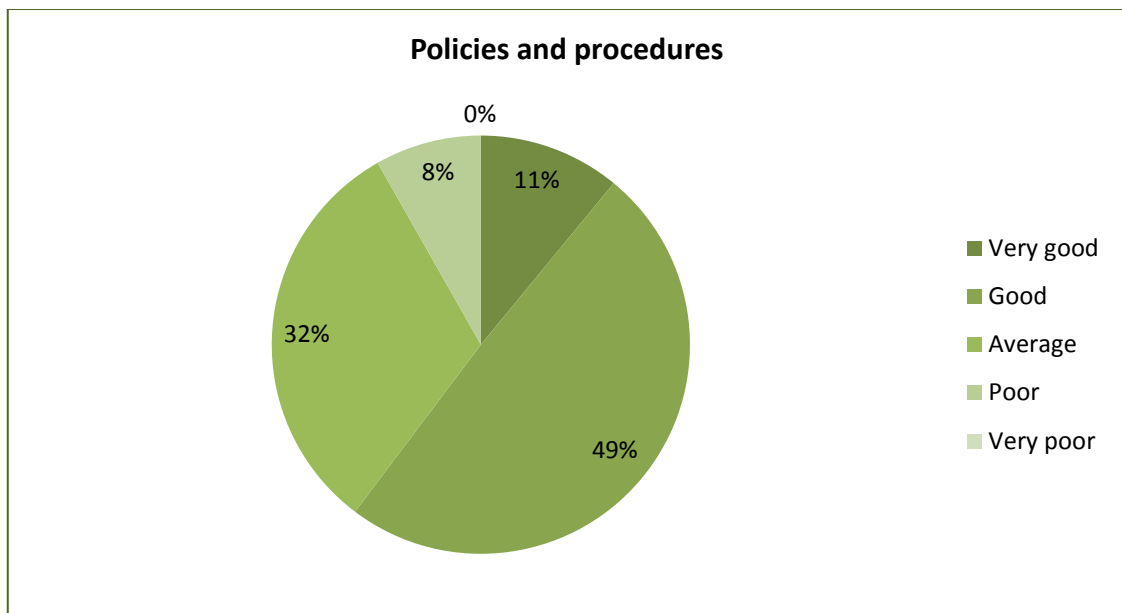


Figure 8

Information needed on a regular or daily basis were covered in questions 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8. It is often middle managers and team leaders that tend to be responsible for daily updates, alerting staff to problems such as absence (Figure 9), technical issues (Figure 10) and other 'news' (Figure 11). Collectively, the average or below responses increased for all three questions, highlighting some dissatisfaction with the more grass roots level information sharing.

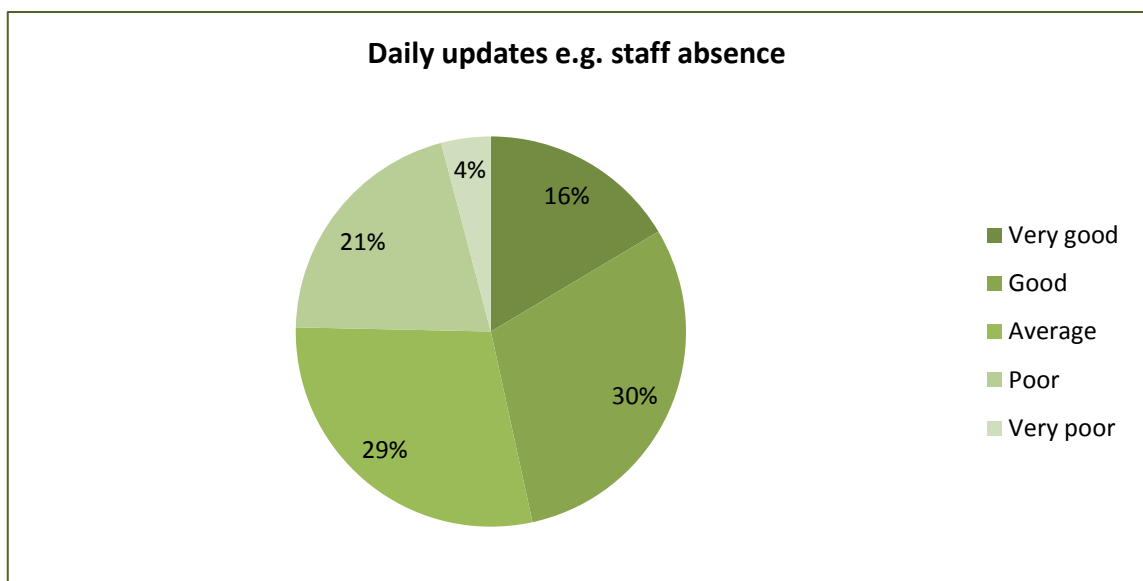


Figure 9

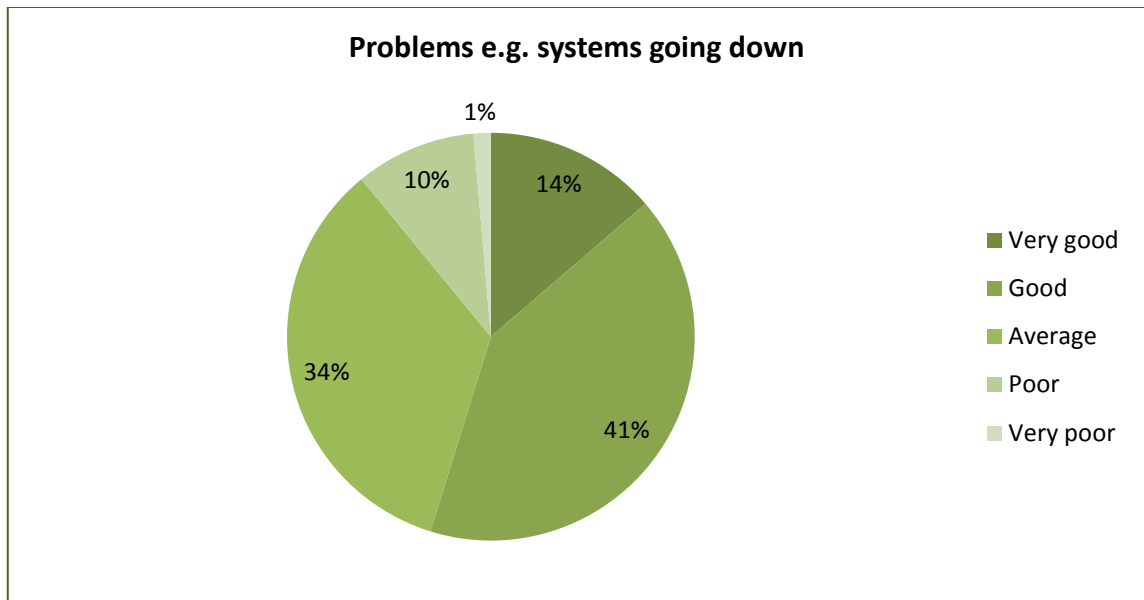


Figure 10

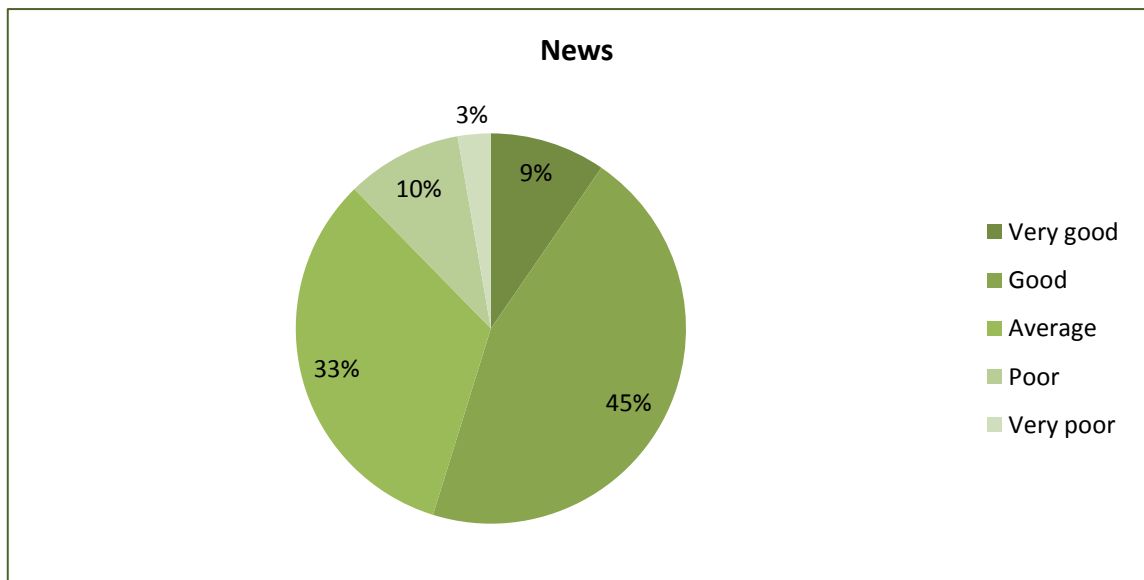


Figure 11

The interview data showed some synergy with the survey; whereas communication from the HoS and senior staff was positively commented on, particularly from teams where there was only one level of management under the HoS. Large teams with more complex layers of management were less satisfied with communication flow. These teams are responsible for many frontline services and depend on fast flowing and changeable information as well as interdependencies on each other. There was

variation in these teams as to whether regular meetings were a feature of their communication strategy and they tended to be comprised of part time workers, job sharers and people working across evenings and weekends:

“I think the supervisors could be a little bit more obvious; we don’t see them much. Often we are given the wrong information on the timetable, ending up at the wrong campus” (P8).

“Sometimes, meetings are cancelled and you talk to someone and they know something you don’t. It’s frustrating because we might be telling students the wrong information” (P10).

Analysis of free text responses to the questionnaire demonstrated that other institutions were experiencing the same issue:

“Lack of communication; sometimes the customer services side of things are left out” (S).

“Not being informed about things (e.g. IT disruptions) which are of relevance to all frontline staff” (S).

Question 5 asked respondents how effective sharing of information was in terms of information coming in to their own team from others (Figure 12). 42.5% replied with yes – most of the time and 56.2% with occasionally. When the question was reversed with information going to other teams from theirs, there was a slight reversal of responses (Figure 13). Yes – most of the time increased and occasionally dropped, highlighting the dichotomy that the respondents may have an elevated perception of their own team’s information sharing capabilities.

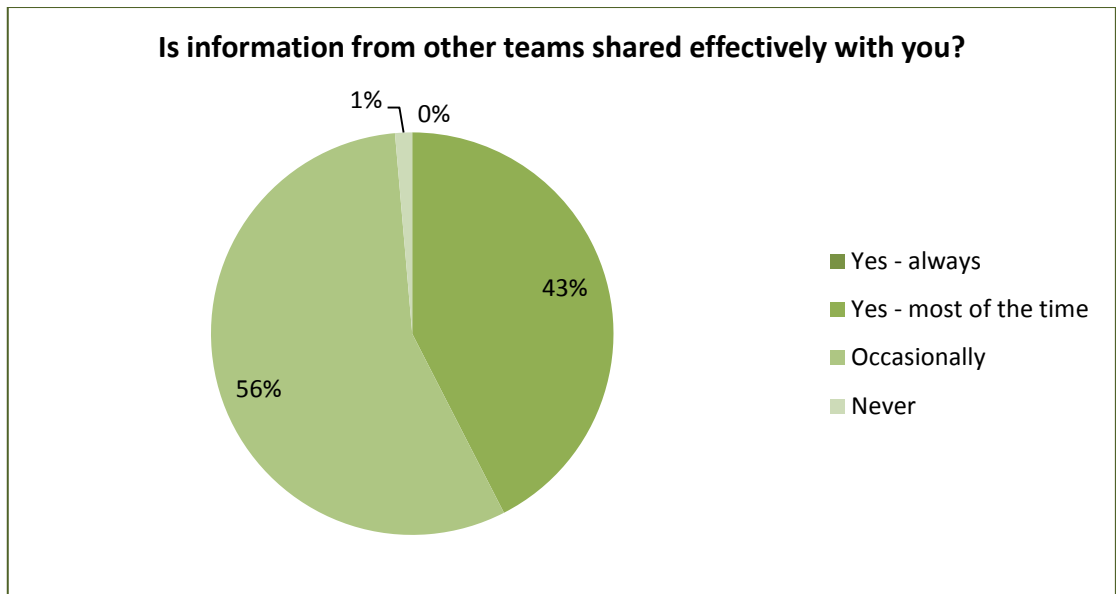


Figure 12

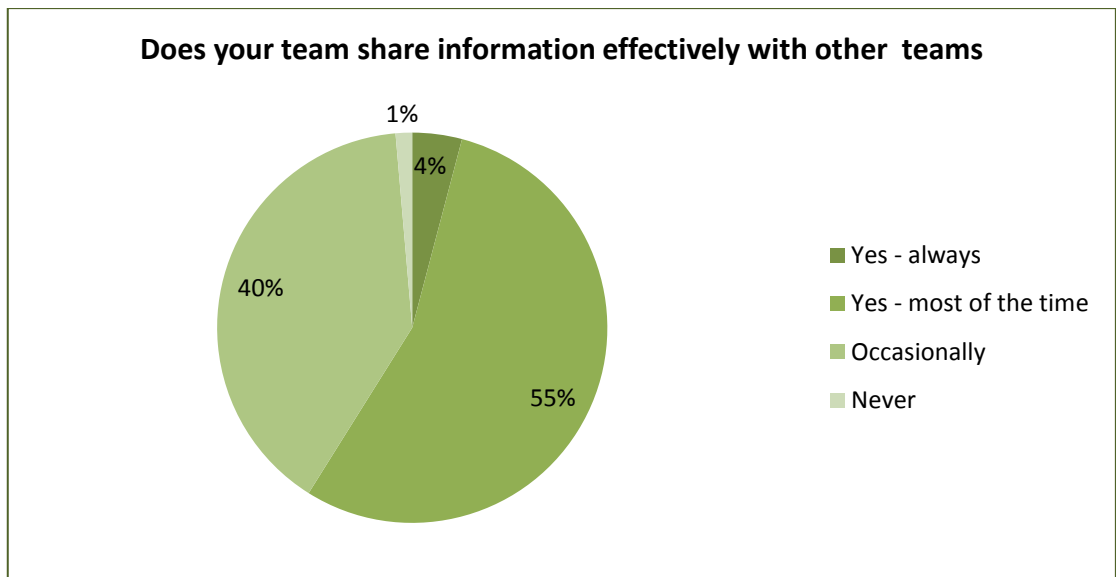


Figure 13

Similarly, the interview data highlighted that communication between teams had significantly more negative comments than top down communication. Participants expressed difficulty in understanding the communication needs of other teams and knowing whether it is appropriate to send them information in case it is superfluous, irrelevant, or irritating:

“I think that it is because of the amount of people in the department, you’ll often have to think who needs to know, second thing is how we going to know? Is an email suitable, or a phone call? (P1).

“Not so good, and that’s not through not wanting to share, I think it’s more likely that people might think you are not bothered about knowing it” (P11).

Some participants discussed the difficulty of not always knowing who members of staff were; despite there being a family tree in the staff room (with photographs) and an online Prezi detailing all staff and their roles. Lack of time and opportunity to connect with colleagues in other teams also appeared to be a factor in understanding communication needs.

Although not converged with IT, a team which deals with the virtual learning environment (VLE) and helping academic staff with technology enhanced learning (TEL) comes under the library remit, and was considered the least communicative of teams. A number of participants expressed the notion that it was not communicated to them what this team actually did within the service:

“You don’t see a lot of them; I come across them more than other customer service assistants but it’s difficult with referrals at times, if you’re not sure who’s who and what they actually do. They’re struggling to come across as transparent as they perhaps need to” (P1).

Moreover, the nature of their communications out to wider teams was considered as often very technical and hard to understand, which didn’t help when relaying information on to staff and students:

“They expect you to understand all the technical things they are talking about. I don’t use the VLE like a student; I’ve never been a student, so it’s a bit hard” (P8).

Some participants felt that teams were compartmentalised (although none reported on their own as being this way) and not sharing may be more to do with the idea of giving away their intellectual property (IP):

“There can be a bit of insularity, and I don’t know whether that’s intentional or through protectionism, it’s like, if we share, we give away our secrets” (P15).

According to Handy (1993, p.299), poor communication, which exists both laterally and vertically, causes decisions to be taken on the wrong information, e.g. two groups working on the same problem and going in different directions, borne out by free text analysis of the survey:

“Due to problems with communication, I think we step on each other’s toes because we don’t know what each other are doing or working on” (S).

Because of the lack of systemised communication between teams, in the case study institution, misunderstandings did occur. One interviewee reported on conducting a research project looking at how the department could embed university goals regarding community engagement across the department, and realised that another team was doing exactly the same thing. Furthermore, the same participant reported that whilst working in a cross-team workshop on embedding technology into all areas of learning and teaching provision (L&T) in the department, it became apparent that effort was being unnecessarily duplicated.

Handy theorised that although there are various models of communication structures, the most advanced is one in which information flows from relationships which are voluntarily entered into, for the mutual purposes of work, learning, mutual support, enjoyment and shared values (p.216). A top down line of command with only some information flowing back up is at the lower end of the scale of effectiveness. According to Elving (2005, p.132), good communication creates the right conditions for commitment and staff who feel they can share their thoughts freely and feel they are being listened to will develop a sense of their own value in that community. Case study interviewees were asked if they felt their voice was heard in the department and the consensus across all participants was that they did; with a number of effective channels to communicate upwards and within their teams, and an atmosphere in which they could feel comfortable doing so. One

participant who is involved in technological developments made the point that he felt his voice was heard because he is one of the few who understands, completely, the technology required to keep the department running, stating: “in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king” (P6).

Summary

The research demonstrates that effective communication varies across different organisations. The questionnaire highlighted a broader dissatisfaction with top-down communication, whilst the interviews demonstrated that the case study institution was experiencing more success in this area; however, across the sector, communication down from middle management and between teams still leaves a lot to be desired.

The following chapter examines the changing roles of staff in academic libraries, in order to stay relevant to their institutions and meet the needs of a diverse and growing set of stakeholders.

Chapter Four - Changing Roles of Staff in Academic Libraries

Since the 1990s much has been written about the changing roles in academic libraries. A study examining job advertisements in the LIS sector from 1971-2001, by Andrews and Ellis (2005) highlighted a development in job descriptions from being safe, predictable and task-based, to less clear cut with more emphasis on the type of person the job demands. This was borne out by Lewis (2010), who observed that current staffing trends demonstrated:

- a change in the mix of staff between librarians and non-librarians
- an increasing need for technology skills
- information finding will become a mass amateur activity but students will need more help in using it
- librarians will spend more time in supporting users in the creation of knowledge, rather than consuming it
- library buildings will change from an emphasis on storage to becoming learning centres with a variety of activities occurring in them

Lewis (p.25) concluded that libraries need to be flexible about staffing but traditional structures and an emphasis on individual roles would present a challenge to this. He offered some solutions, including having a clear strategy on recruitment and bringing in new skills, whereas Pennell (2010), advocates the creation of flexible job descriptions allowing freedom to provide richer and more creative learning and development opportunities for those identified as having higher potential in an organisation. A more recent US study by Gremmels, in 2013, examined staffing practices in college and university libraries and discussed a number of developing trends: front line staff shifting to paraprofessionals; technical services work being outsourced, eliminated or automated; library work becoming more higher level, with greater educational expectations, and some libraries consistently hiring non-library professionals. She asserts that there is often a dichotomy between what should change first; library staff or library roles and concludes that they need to develop simultaneously by making changes where possible, forcing change when necessary, seeing what works and applying that learning to the next stage (p.248).

An abundance of practitioner literature exists highlighting that job design has become a significant factor to be considered during convergence projects, with a number of organisations reporting on their experience of creating and amending roles to support a structure to match the needs of all stakeholders and stay relevant in the information society (Sykes, p.65, Gallacher, p.69 and Melling & Weaver, 2013). The case study organisation has made significant changes in staffing to ensure the workforce is equipped for fast-paced change and able to meet all stakeholder requirements. Since the restructure, new posts have been created whilst others have evolved into new entities. Emphasis on recruitment has been in teams supporting students in their academic achievement and in supporting academic staff in their use of TEL. New roles, such as learning technologists, are being created to help in the development of online learning and teaching tools, and there has been an increase in the rate of paraprofessionals undertaking duties usually carried out by LIS professionals. These areas correspond with the trends in the literature on increasing numbers of students, from all over the world (The university is working in collaboration with many overseas educational providers) studying from all walks of life and wanting help at their immediate point of need.

Recruitment has also changed in that many of the frontline customer services staff are degree qualified in other areas and come into the organisation for entry level jobs, hoping to move upwards in the organisation; however, it appears there is a problem with accommodating those paraprofessionals who want to get on quickly and are pressing for higher level tasks:

“I get people who want to get on and that’s great, fantastic, it’s a university for God’s sake! But we do have a high turnover of frontline staff because they move on to other things and that’s what we’d expect from a Grade 3 position. They say “I’m qualified in this and I can do that”, but the job we gave them is the one we want doing. Some accept it and get on, others understand but still try. They’re the hardest ones, because you really want to say yes” (P1).

Three participants did question the sense in taking on people too qualified for the job as it can lead to de-motivation and frustration:

“Yeah, they’re as bored as hell all day, sitting on the desk doing nothing, maybe doing a bit of shelving. The mentality of employing Masters level people for Grade 3 level, to me, does not make any sense whatsoever!” (P2).

Despite there being a high level of turnover in lower graded frontline roles, higher graded jobs such as supporting and training staff on the VLE do not specify related qualifications or a degree as essential; it is more important to have the right kind of experience and personality:

“Someone who understands the technology landscape and can adapt; dynamic, happy with change, have a try, flexible, enthusiastic and happy to talk to others about it” (P11).

Nevertheless, whilst there is an emphasis on recruiting flexible employees, effective job design does play an integral part in addressing the changing status and roles of both professional and support staff as technology transforms tasks once allocated to professionals, such as automated cataloguing (Farley et al, 1998, p.243). As far back as the 1990s, the emergence of paraprofessionals was a growing phenomenon in US academic libraries. In 1992, a national survey found that role definition was weak and an overlap between tasks performed by librarians and paraprofessionals existed, leading to role-blurring which, in turn, led to confusion for staff and clientele. The study concluded that there was a need to define the role, status and working conditions of librarians and paraprofessionals alike by the development of standards, guidelines, and other policy statements concerned with staff structures, classification systems, basic and continuing education as well as degree and certification requirements (Oberg, Mentges, McDermott & Harusadangkul p.235). A major theme to come out of the analysis of comments in the survey free text highlighted that a significant majority of respondents were unhappy and frustrated with role-blurring in the superconverged organisation:

“Blurred lines as to where one team begins and ours ends and vice versa” (S).

“There is a point where the team roles overlap and there isn’t clear delineation, people feel that their toes are being stepped on” (S).

“The differences between roles are blurred. We consciously try not to overstep the mark, I’m not sure our colleagues in other teams are as considerate” (S).

Abbott (1998, p.33) however, asserts that with role-blurring, the ambitious could find opportunities to broaden their skills base in superconverged organisations, not previously open to them. Whilst this is a positive thing, it is the case that not all library staff may share this view; the survey highlighted that some respondents reacted negatively to their jobs changing or expanding into other areas:

“We used to be library assistants, but suddenly we became student IT and media support without warning or training” (S).

“I am IT support, student services, library assistant, and customer service support, additional needs support, and media support!” (S).

During the superconvergence project at the case study institution, job descriptions were updated in consultation with staff and so the majority of participants were happy that their job descriptions did match their daily tasks and perceptions of what their role should be. However, one participant was in the process of working with HR to rewrite their job description as the job had organically evolved over the years to reflect the university’s strategy to become more community focussed, and some early successful projects had had the effect of ramping up demand from the local community, causing concerns about sustainability:

“The school visits stressed me out to the max; all the requests coming in and lots of pressure from the schools. There is stuff on the website now, you can sign up for X,Y or Z and here’s how many students you can bring, this is what you signed up for and this is what I’m going to deliver” (P9).

The literature shows that the role of the academic librarian (also often termed subject or liaison librarian) has, arguably, changed the most in academic libraries. In

2003, five years after the Dearing Report, Ruth Wilson undertook a small study on the changing roles of professional library staff involved in learner support such as subject librarians and study skills practitioners, to see if jobs were changing as predicted. There was evidence that activities concerned with teaching and learning had substantially increased, however, 82% of those surveyed were heavily involved in other tasks, which lead to the question of role ambiguity and how long to spend on each task. Furthermore, other tasks traditionally carried out by librarians as intermediaries of knowledge had almost disappeared, with a focus evolving on them as 'infomediaries' in which they, instead, facilitate exchanges of information (Biddiscombe, 2002, p.229). By 2015, Delany and Bates reported a significant emphasis on teaching information literacy with librarians embedding themselves into the curriculum as opposed to being an add-on to other academic activity. According to Pinfield (2001), the role of the subject librarian has also changed in that more emphasis is placed on: liaison with users; advocacy of the collections; working with technical staff; selection of e-resources; organising the 'information landscape, and involvement in educational technology and learning environments, as well as cross-team and project work (p33). Professional identity in the converged academic library was the subject of a study in 2006, by Wilson and Halpin, which examined the effects of convergence upon academic librarians and the result of their four case studies in British university libraries concluded that the role of the traditional subject librarian has been superseded by the role of the hybrid librarian and the generic duties and skills associated with the post.

This appears to be the case at the case study institution; despite the academic librarians agreeing that their job descriptions were fairly accurate, a number of other tasks were being added to their role and causing issues around sustainability:

“Because we face multiple audiences, some things get shoveled our way because it’s a kind of “they can do that too” (P15).

The types of add-ons include engaging with the community, such as school visits for information literacy skills sessions, and writing reports for, as well as increasingly

attending, approval events for overseas educational provision. However, other tasks have not diminished in importance and teaching workloads, in their affiliated schools, has grown beyond sustainable levels. Lots of effort has gone into creating videos, Camtasia and e-activities to replace face-to-face teaching but that has meant the team taking time out to develop the new skills, which has invariably caused other pressures, in terms of maintaining a service, whilst attempting to make the transition from a legacy service to one of innovative transformation:

“We are trying to be everything to everyone, in every period, to meet those notions of what a librarian should be for everybody, so we should look at what it means to be a librarian in 2015, not what it was in 1990” (P15).

“I think we need to think about ways in which we add value and start to work smarter, if we gave ourselves lots of time to develop e-activities, that would free up teaching time” (P3).

There has been a move towards the customer service team helping academic librarians with some tasks, such as checking reading lists and weeding old stock, however, this has been met with some resistance:

“They may see that we’re taking their job away from them when all you are trying to do is help. And there is the question of quality as well; they might wonder if colleagues in front line teams are as good as they should be and that’s a fair thing to question” (P1).

“We’re not gonna do your teaching for you cos we can’t, but this will allow you to do another half hour’s prep, perhaps for your teaching” (P5).

Opinions differed on this development though, and not everyone saw it as a threat:

“I really value my MA, my librarian’s qualification, but there’s nothing I’ve learnt at library school I couldn’t have learnt on the job, so to speak, and actually, I think that it’s great if people want to broaden their skills set and get involved, I think we should encourage and empower them” (P3).

Although not in every team's job description, many of the participants, at all levels of the organisation, mentioned that being research active is implicit and embedded in the culture of the service and was positively encouraged. Participants appeared happy to take part in practitioner and pedagogic research projects outside of their remit, in order to meet the goals of the department:

“Where it's different is in the research and writing opportunities and other projects. The kinds of things that don't come in the job description, which actually makes it more interesting for me” (P2).

“Research is extra-curricular and not in many job descriptions, but it is encouraged” (P4).

With developments such as this, training and development play an important part in equipping the workforce with new skills required for the new workplace landscape and motivation and commitment to the role will increase if staff feel they have the knowledge and skills to be successful. Back in 1995, Corral (p.41) recommended that investment in staff development and training regarding: interpersonal and communication skills; management and business concepts and techniques; professional and technical competencies, and an understanding of pedagogic issues and learning styles would be needed in anticipation of Fielden's projected “para-academic” roles for subject specialists. As far back as 1998, Abbott reported that there were difficulties in organising consistent training for all types of staff in converged services; an issue which was borne out in the survey. Staff more likely to demonstrate dissatisfaction in having opportunities for training and development communicated to them were in customer service roles, whereas professional librarians and those in IT related roles showed more satisfaction (Figure 14).

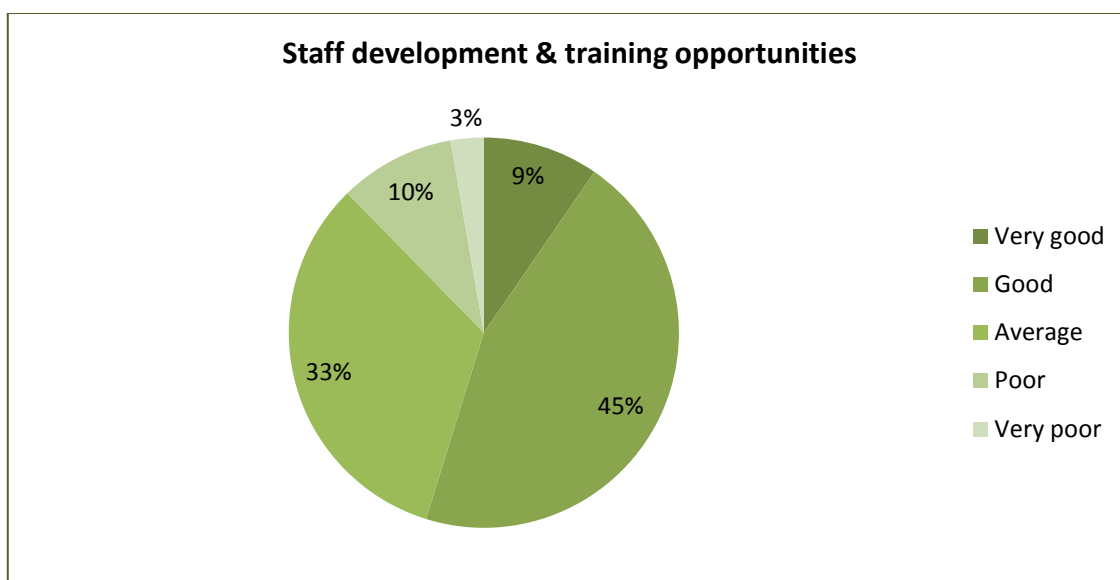


Figure 14

In the interviews, almost all participants reported that they had access to training and development opportunities, but cited time as a factor in taking things up; instead preferring to take advantage of other ways of developing, whether as individuals or in teams:

“I’ve not encountered anything which shakes my confidence, but I am more self-taught; lots of webinars and training sessions from the grad school” (P4).

“I’m quite happy; I’ll do a quick Google, chat to a colleague; everybody is happy to upskill each other. I’m happy to teach myself and the culture is very flexible and Lynda.com is now available (P12).

“There are lots of training opportunities, my manager is proactive and we have two hours team training a week, where sometimes one of us will cascade to the others” (P11).

One participant reflected on working with new software to create online e-activities and videos and made the distinction between finding time to train and having the head space to experiment with new tools instead of hurriedly creating things as a fire fighting approach:

“The biggest problem to training is actually time, and sometimes you need time to be free and experiment, to test and play around with things, and sometimes, to fail and try again” (P15).

Given that training and development opportunities were in abundance, participants were questioned on their level of confidence in their given role. Most reported confidence in carrying out the basic requirements of their roles; it was the ‘add-ons’ such as conducting research or the rapid rate of change which caused worry for some:

“I’m doing some research and that’s something I would like more help in, more time, or a critical friends because, the job role I can do but the other things that would enhance the job, I’ve got no time for” (P13).

“My confidence changes on a day to day basis, sometimes I feel fine, sometimes I feel overwhelmed. Just the level of change and how fast, how the hell are we ever gonna get there and have the skills to be able to do this?” (P7).

“About 80-90%! I don’t feel confident when things change, such as the start of term” (P8).

Summary

It was predicted in the literature, as far back as the early 90s, there would be a sea change in the types of roles and activities carried out in academic libraries. Many of these predictions have been proven correct and the workforce today is made up of a mixture of professionals and paraprofessionals with a significant degree of role-blurring between the two. As predicted by the Follett Report, the role of academic librarians has evolved to heavily encompass subject-based user support with an emphasis on pedagogical knowledge. However, the case study organisation has shown that their role has also significantly developed in the areas of community engagement and approval events for overseas partners. The literature made no predictions of library staff (at all levels) conducting research to improve services and it may be that the case study organisation is rather unique in this endeavour.

The landscape of training and development is changing with more help becoming freely available online and a move towards upskilling between individuals and within teams. For some organisations, role definition and job design continue to be a problem, but more flexible employees appear happy to go with the flow, understanding that the right personality, along with the right transferable skills is going to be at the forefront of recruitment in academic libraries.

The following chapter will examine the types of conflict and work-related pressures which staff experience in superconverged organisations.

Chapter Five - Conflict and Other Workplace Stress

This chapter will examine the types of conflict and other work pressures experienced by staff in superconverged academic libraries. Taking into consideration the medley of both individuals and teams required to resource a superconverged academic library, it is clear that conflict, in its many guises, is a major concern for management.

Conflict, according to Kathman and Kathman:

...exists whenever there are important unresolved differences among people, groups or departments and may arise in response to interpersonal or interdepartmental differences, job ambiguities, a deficient system of communication, or environmental stress (1990, p.145).

A number of writers have discussed conflict in relation to academic libraries and convergence, although mainly from the point of view of librarians and IT workers (Pugh, 1997, Hanson & Day, 1998 & Zink et al, 2009). Issues appear to occur around technical orientation versus service orientation, differences in education and training, perceptions of academic status, salary expectations, differing communication styles and terminologies and vastly different professional histories, and these differences have left some convergence projects “stalling at the admin level”(Pugh, 1997, p.54). Bailey & Tierney (2002, p.25.) describe some of the threats to successful convergence as “resistance, chauvinism, dogmatism, and concerns over loss of professional identity”. Inter-departmental relations can also be strained as each department may have its own goals, values, objectives and procedures, according to its type and level of service, although, it is natural that a department will give higher priority to its own mission than that of others (Kathman & Kathman, 1990, p.146 & Edwards & Walton, 2000, p.36). As funding gets tighter, inter-departmental conflict will also be bound up in competition for scarce resources such as space, funding and equipment (Pettas & Gilliland, 1992, p.24) and Edwards and Walton also purport that “Inequitable treatment” (where one team is perceived to have more favorable treatment over another) and resentment over violation of territory (whether physical or over people being provided a service) can cause tension and conflict (2000, p.36).

Question 7 of the survey asked whether respondents experienced conflict with other teams and over 70% answered in the affirmative (Figure 15). The next stage was to determine what type of conflict was occurring.

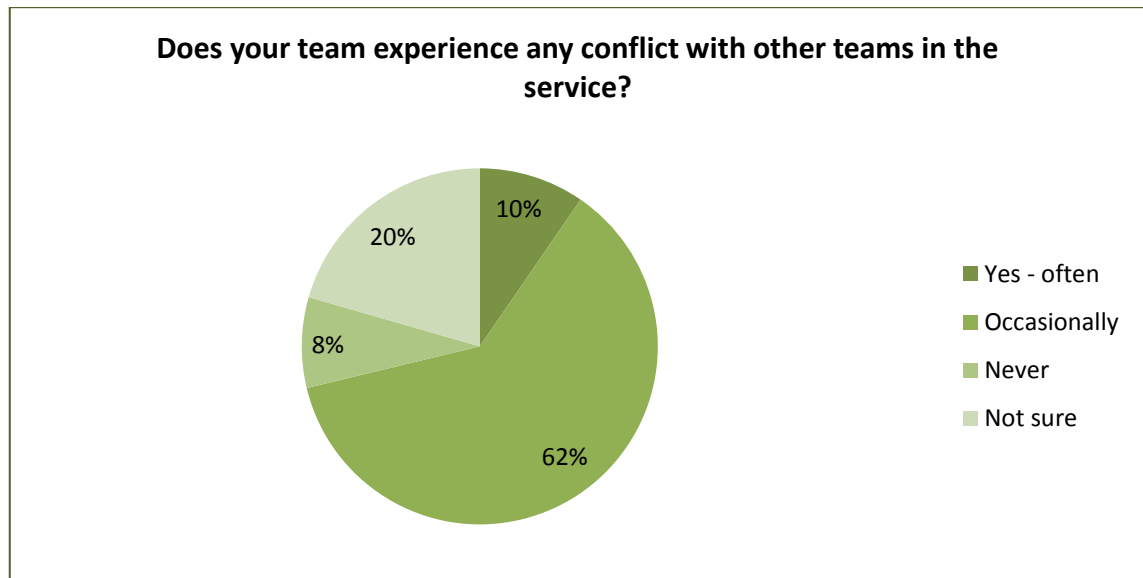


Figure 15

Role-conflict is to be avoided in converged organisations, as discussed by Farley et al back in 1998 (p.243), but it was still a major theme to come out the free text survey responses. This theme has a strong synergy with the UK literature, in that role-conflict in converged organisations is still prevalent and causing tensions, as was the case with the interviews too.

Jurisdiction of tasks in professional and paraprofessional library work was examined by Applegate in 2010, by way of an electronic survey disseminated primarily by listservs and email. Jurisdiction was referred to for the purposes of the study as “those tasks or responsibilities that are seen as central to and exclusively controlled by a profession” (p. 288). He found that jurisdiction is almost impossible to define with problems at both the local and specific level, as well as the difficulty in defining librarianship as a whole.

The free text analysis of responses to the survey highlighted lines- blurring between teams and a difficulty in understanding what jurisdiction teams have. In the interviews, role-blurring was mentioned as the issue that caused the most tension;

some of the teams face multiple audiences and it is in these teams where the most blurring of boundaries occurs, mainly around the teaching of information literacy skills and blended learning:

“...perhaps sort of feeling that they are taking over what we are trying to do, it’s an ownership thing, and it’s like that’s what *we* do!” (P3).

“One person in a team feels that someone is doing their job; sometimes deliberately, sometimes by accident” (P15).

“If everybody knows what their responsibilities are and their remit, it would make things easier; that’s my main frustration” (P13).

Cain (2003, p.180), however, recognised the complementary nature of role-blurring and the need to provide cross-pollination; something which some interviewees saw as a positive development too:

“I like role-blurring because it’s given me the flexibility to push the boundaries of my role” (P7).

“But with blurred lines, you get the opportunities to collaborate” (P3).

“It’s like the breathing room on the edges, of being able to use your strengths and interests to create stuff” (P7).

The case study institution data demonstrated that attitudes are becoming less hierarchical and more collegiate within the organisation, and that conflict over role-blurring was less of a problem than for survey respondents. The institution has been superconverged for four years and there was a sense that most of the teams were working towards the same goals, giving less opportunity for conflict. However, one area which had a synergy with the survey data was a lack of understanding over other team’s priorities and their very different ways of working; in other words, cultural conflict. Kathman and Kathman posited that cultural conflict can arise when staff

members try to apply their own values and expectations of how things ought to work in the library to other staff members (1990, p.146).

Question 8 asked respondents if there were any cultural differences between the teams which may impact on service (Figure 16).

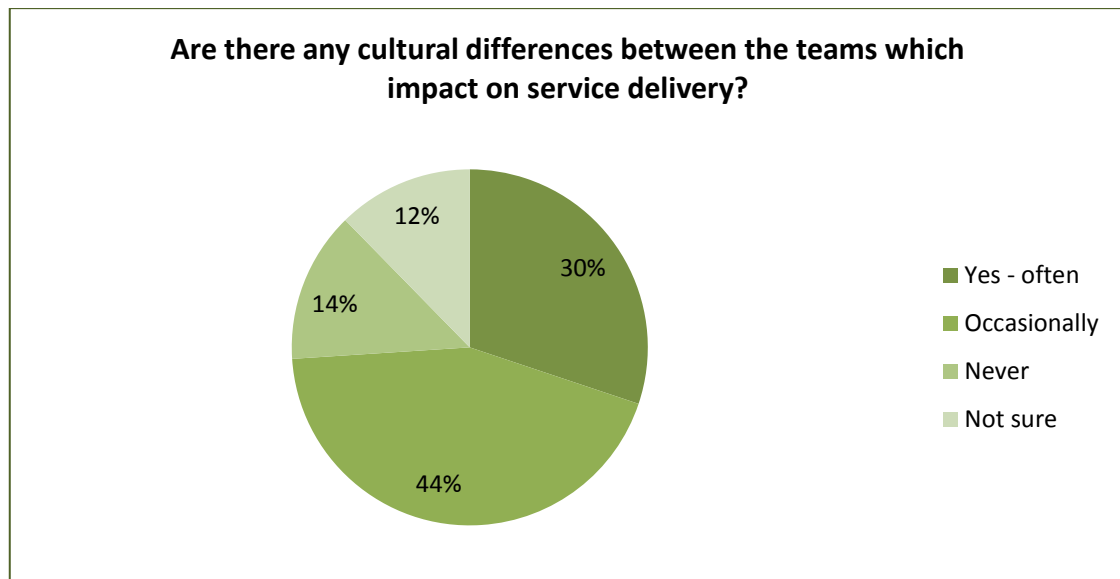


Figure 16

A resounding 74% answered with yes – often or yes - sometimes. 12% said they were not sure if cultural differences existed and a number of interviewees said as much, which may have stemmed from a lack understanding of what was meant by cultural differences. Once prompted with the explanation that for the purposes of this study, cultural difference meant different ways of going about everyday business, they all had something to say.

The term silo is defined as working in isolation with different process and procedures (Oxford Dictionary online) and the notion of people working in silos came up in both survey and interviews:

“Us and them: siloed!” (S).

“There does seem to be a silo between library and IT” (S).

"I still think that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] don't consider themselves as part of the library; they are in their own little kibbles (?). They see themselves as apart from... and they have a different mentality to the rest of us" (P2).

Working in silos has the effect of rendering people unaware of each other's purpose within the organisation; another prevalent theme, which highlighted a lack of engagement and support of other teams' work and workloads:

"Other teams have different priorities to mine; this can occasionally result in a lack of engagement with each other's work" (S).

"Lack of support from other departments sometimes leads to conflict" (S).

"It's difficult for people to know what librarians do because of how much their remit is; that volume is not comprehended by other teams" (P15).

Differences in culture between student facing support teams and those not student facing was also a point of discussion raised. The latter were, typically, based in more IT or specialised areas and the issue of accessibility, both in the physical and language sense was perceived as a problem:

"Some 'back room' services seem to forget the front line importance" (S).

"Silo, technical speak, different language. Frustration coming from having to divert struggling students to help on the VLE. Humans need a person to speak to sometimes." (P1).

"It's a closed door, you can't come in the office but you can speak to us by a different means, by email, or go look at the app, but sometimes you gotta get up out your seat" (P1).

Some of these issues are quite clearly going to cause people frustration but some of the survey comments about other teams demonstrated some very negative attitudes:

"passive aggressive, unhappy with decisions which are out of our control and blame us" (S).

“People should get over themselves; there is way too much ego insecurity. It’s a good job we don’t work in traffic control otherwise the country would be grounded!” (S).

With responses also mentioning: fighting over resources, tensions when undertaking cross-team group work, territoriality, problems over shared space, and dependencies not being considered in cross-team projects, it appears there is still a lot work to be done in getting teams across superconverged services to work more coherently together and understand the scope, purpose and confines of their roles within the organisation. As one respondent put it:

“It may be classed as superconverged, but in reality it has actually caused the department to be split into 4-5 sections, all working differently!” (S).

In terms of other work pressures, time was cited as being a major concern. At the time of the interviews, the new academic year start was one week away with a significant number of new partner institutions, at home and abroad, requiring support, and understandably, some staff members were a little nervous:

“The pressure of those students that are wanting support in different ways, depending on what institution it is, that’s enormous pressure” (P3).

The summer period is, typically, a time when academic libraries carry out the annual rollover for the VLE and introduce new services, to minimise disruption to existing staff and students, and the interviews demonstrated that staff are under significant pressure at this time:

“There has been tension around implementing the new library management system (LMS) and other software because of how many teams it affects and how quickly it gets rolled out” (P14).

“We are never given enough time to do our job; we don’t get enough time to test out new technologies which they (management) are so keen to embrace” (P6).

Another pressure, reported by staff in the case study institution is the marketisation of universities, as discussed by Molesworth et al (2009). Marketisation has the effect of turning students into customers and increasing expectations:

“There is more and more marketing on our service, demand is getting higher and there’s only a finite amount of us” (P7).

“Because, the students are customers; they don’t care if tutors still call them students. They are customers, they’ve paid a lot of money and we are in competition with, y’know, other institutions around us, so they get exactly what they want, and we deliver it” (P1).

Most participants commented on pressure from students and academic staff who show no perception of the pressures they face:

“It’s interesting to work with academics because they want everything yesterday but ask for it tomorrow!” (P11).

“Students leave things to the last minute and that pressure gets passed on to us. Often tutors book things in at the last minute too” (P12).

“The academics just want to know if it works and some people are very unhelpful” P6).

Summary

Successful superconvergence in which all employees work in harmony, it seems, is almost incomprehensible, given the disparate cultures of the individuals and the teams responsible for making it work. Despite much literature on the topic of conflict and suggestions on how to avoid it, it would appear that it cannot be resolved completely, even in the most developed superconverged organisations. Issues around

role-conflict and jurisdiction are as prevalent today as when Farley et al discussed them, back in 1998. The case study institution, however, has demonstrated that it is possible to regard role-blurring as a positive phenomenon which encourages staff to step outside their comfort zone.

Staff in superconverged services are busier than ever in coping with new types of demanding global stakeholders, fast-paced change, particularly in IT developments, having to undertake IT support roles without much training, the pressure of students as 'customers' and academic staff needs rising exponentially. These issues are causing anxiety to staff in superconverged services and it doesn't appear that this will get better any time soon in the current volatile climate where academic library services are being pulled in all different directions.

The following chapter will examine formal and informal collaboration between teams in superconverged services.

Chapter Six - Collaboration

Edwards & Walton (2000, p.40) posit that in order to overcome many types of organisational conflict, genuine collaboration offers the best solution in theory. They advocate a top-down approach to setting up the systems by which to collaborate and ensuring they are maintained. Kathman and Kathman also consider collaboration as being appropriate to resolve the different needs and perspectives of the various teams that make up the staff of an HE library (1990, p.149). Wenger argues that the success of an organisation depends on its ability to become a social learning system or organisation (2000). According to Senge (1990, p.3), learning organisations are “organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together”. Learning organisations develop from interaction, collaboration and collegiality among groups of workers who share common goals and concerns. Freedman posits that collegiality, defined as “shared power and authority among colleagues and cooperative interaction among colleagues” is important in overcoming conflict and that organisations should have a leader who values collegiality and who takes steps to foster opportunities for collaboration, both formal and informal (2009, p.378).

Question 9 of the survey asked if there were procedures in place to encourage cross-team working with around half responding either in the negative or not actually being aware if that was the case, which may be linked to a lack of communication, as discussed in chapter 3. Cross-tabulated data shows no significant correlation between the length of time a service has been superconverged to having consistent procedures in place to encourage cross-team working; therefore, it may be down to other factors such as management style.

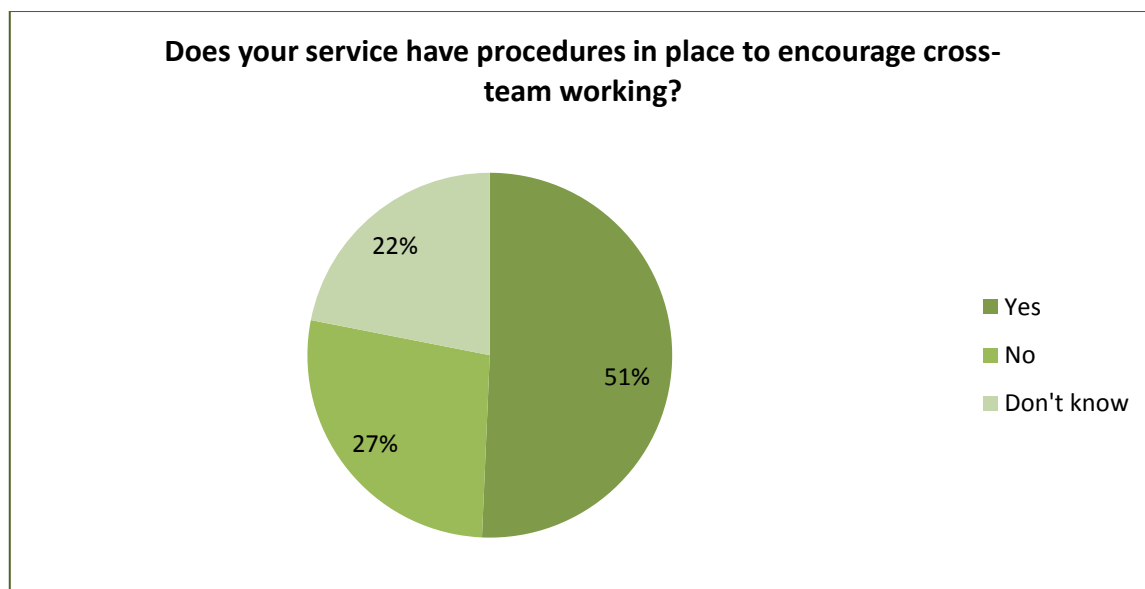


Figure 17

Various writers on convergence and superconvergence have discussed team development and collaboration as being encouraged via formal methods of boundary spanning including cross-team working groups (Weaver, 2013, Toole, 2005, p.43, Haines, Methven & Yeoh, 2005, p.71 and Corral, 2005, p.148). Pugh (1997 p.65) examined team development in his survey on convergence and, across the 162 institutions that responded, he reported that fully converged services showed a high degree of team maturity with 16% demonstrating 80% or more of team characteristics, with an equal % showing some evidence of multiskilling. 36% had constructed teams from across old service boundaries.

The interviews showed that collaboration in the case study institution was much further developed since superconvergence, with all team leaders having a responsibility to ensure that cross-team working was in place within the department and in the wider organisation. One successful initiative was the creation of a biennial research conference to showcase the practitioner and pedagogic research going on in the department. The conference prompted staff to look at ways of conducting research relevant to more than one team, such as a project between academic librarians and the team which deals with resources, on the use of Talis Aspire reading lists.

All participants reported feeling comfortable with the collaborative events going on within and beyond the department and felt supported in taking part in these activities, even though time and work priorities were an issue sometimes:

“The teams across the department have different working styles and expectations, so when we have to work together on projects, there’s usually tensions, in terms of when you can get away from your desk, expectations of students, that sort of thing” (P12).

Creating formal ways to collaborate is one way of encouraging cross-pollination and collegiality between teams and departments, but staff coming together voluntarily and informally, from a grass roots perspective, is another way of cultivating an organisation in which learning and knowledge creation occur through collaboration and socialisation. These groups are known as Communities of Practice (CoPs); a term coined by Lave and Wenger in 1991. The definition of a CoP, for the purposes of this study, is “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, in Bolisani and Scarso, 2013, p.369). Many CoPs form spontaneously although there is a practice of cultivating and utilising them from a management perspective (Wenger, 2004, Yamklin & Igel, 2012 and Iaquinto, Ison & Faggian, 2010). According to Bolisani and Scarso, “the most successful CoPs have always combined bottom-up enthusiasm and initiatives from members with top-down encouragement from the organisation” (2013, p.366). CoPs appear most often within a specific group, e.g. librarians, but there is room for manoeuvre at the boundaries of these groups, particularly in superconverged organisations, via what Wenger (2000, p.233) refers to as ‘brokering’; that is, people acting as brokers between communities. Wenger posits that brokering takes various forms, including:

- boundary spanners: those taking care of one boundary at a time
- roamers: going from place to place, creating connections, moving knowledge
- outposts: bringing back news from the forefront, exploring new territories

- pairs: through a personal relationship between two people from different communities with the relationship acting as a brokering device

Question 10 of the survey asked whether staff had voluntarily worked with members of other teams to meet the service’s objectives, e.g. delivering information literacy skills sessions or improving services. Librarians made up 100% of those who answered yes – often and 50% of those who answered yes – sometimes, highlighting that despite increasing workloads, they were most likely to be found volunteering for other duties and projects (Figure 18).

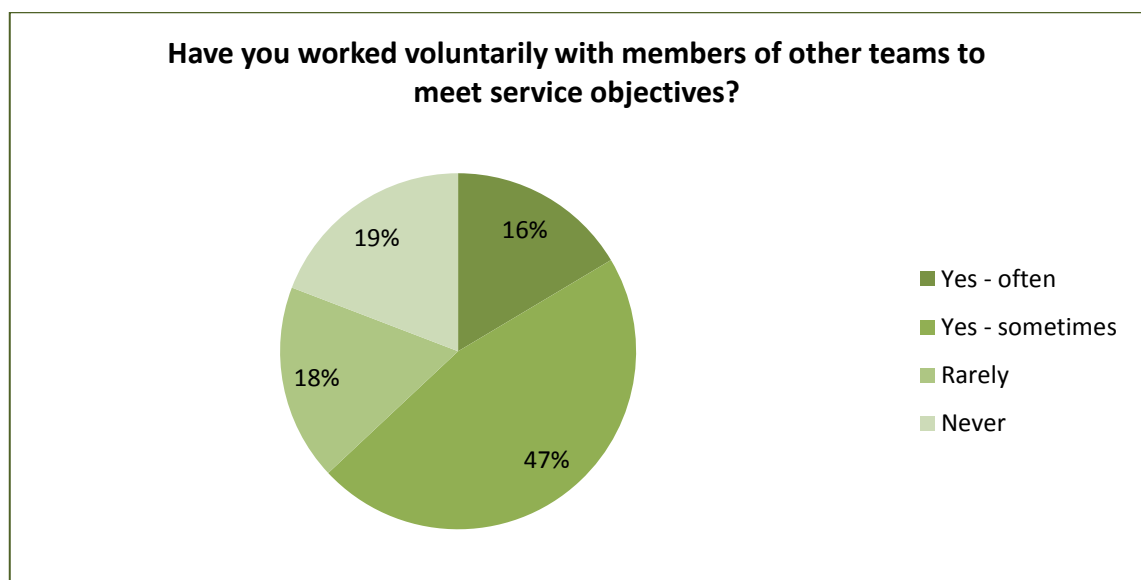


Figure 18

Information Literacy (IL), according to SCONUL, is an umbrella term which encompasses concepts such as digital, visual and media literacies, academic literacy, information handling, information skills, data curation and data management. The majority of responses from both the survey and the interviews on working together voluntarily were based around academic librarians and study skills tutors team working in conjunction to embed skills into the curriculum, such as critical thinking, literature searching and academic writing.

Corrall (2004, p.32 in Oldroyd) states that one “absolute and integrating requirement is to develop sufficient knowledge and understanding of each area of expertise

outside of one's own in order to communicate and work productively with specialties other than one's own". As one interviewee put it:

"If you are working really collaboratively, you are not focussing on your own ego, your own self-betterment; you are focussing on, these are our students or our service users, this is their need and what do we collectively need to do with our skills to help them and provide the best service possible?" (P15).

The case study institution expanded on innovative developments in this area, in order to support the needs of a diverse and growing set of stakeholders. Their aim is to create a series of MOOCs (massive open online courses), SOOCs (smaller open online sources) and e-activities, either as standalone activities or as elements in academic programmes. These resources are developed by way of two day events, in which a team comprising of librarians, study skills tutors, academic programme staff and the team responsible for the VLE completely strip back modules and programmes of study and rebuild them, focusing on strategic alignment of learning outcomes to assessment and ensuring they can be delivered in a blended learning environment. These events have been very successful in terms of forging relationships between staff and, as a consequence, other collaborative projects have come out of people realising that they have mutual areas of interest which they can explore together:

"I think collaboration, true collaboration, sometimes feels a bit messier. It tends to happen much more on the basis of individuals building relationships for a particular purpose" (P7).

Survey respondents also reported on collaborating voluntarily on induction, providing IT support, cross-team working groups, such as marketing and communication, and providing in-house training. These responses were all focussed on working within the department, yet the case study institution demonstrated a significant amount of voluntary collaboration concerned with effecting social change in the local community, on a range of projects such as facilitating local reading groups, teaching information skills sessions for schools, and carrying out mock employability

interviews in local educational organisations. Furthermore, a number of events are organised regularly, including photography and creative writing competitions, open to all staff and students which culminate in exhibitions or sharing sessions, which, in turn, foster positive relationships and collegiality.

Summary

There is a concurrence in the literature that collaboration in superconverged organisations is vital if teams are to understand each other's goals, where they each fit in with the organisational strategy and how their objectives fit together in the jigsaw. True collaboration occurs when people are given the time and resources to work together effectively and share a common interest in the subject.

The survey demonstrates that collaboration is increasing in superconverged services but there is still not enough being done, with nearly half the respondents not taking part in collaborative activities, either through not being aware of them or none being in place.

The case study institution appears to be well-developed in terms of collaborative practice across the organisation. The strong vision and direction from the HoS has enabled it to go beyond collaboration as a superficial tick box exercise; however, this may be attributed more to personality and is therefore not guaranteed if a change in management comes about.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the research was to investigate, at grass roots level, the experiences of staff in superconverged academic library services, in relation to communication, changing roles, conflict, workplace stress and collaborative practice. The objectives of the research were to establish the historical development and current context of superconvergence in the UK, review and critically analyse the literature, and conduct empirical research to examine the current situation in UK academic libraries. The concluding chapter will revisit these objectives, reflecting on and concluding the findings of the research.

6.2 Research objectives: summary and findings and conclusions

Objective 1: Establish the historical development and current context of superconvergence in academic libraries

Literature from a variety of sources provided information on the development and current context of superconvergence in the UK. The research evaluated literature both from change management theory and information science literature which helped construct a detailed picture of the development of convergence through to superconvergence, including the main drivers. The conclusions drawn from existing literature showed that there is a plethora of different structures and practices in superconvergence and varying degrees of success, with some organisations choosing to de-converge. There are a number of case studies of convergence and superconvergence but they tend to focus on describing how it was brought about from a management perspective. The relatively non-existent amount of research, focusing explicitly on how it is for staff at the grass roots level of service delivery, other than anecdotally in the case studies, provided the impetus for further research.

Objective 2: Identify key themes for superconvergence in academic libraries

Through an extensive literature review process, incorporating a literature search and evaluation, analysis and synthesis of all relevant literature, five key areas emerged of current relevance to superconvergence in academic libraries: communication,

changing roles of LIS staff, conflict, workplace stress and collaboration. These themes were used as the focus of the research and to support the both the empirical research and the thematic structure to the final research product.

Objective 3: Explore what staff in superconverged organisations are actually experiencing in relation to communication, changing roles, conflict, workplace stress and collaboration

A mixed methods approach was chosen to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with a literature review, questionnaire and interviews chosen as the methods. The triangulation of these methods enabled examination of existing research and comparison across organisations, whilst allowing for detailed exploration of participants' experiences and responses.

The main conclusions from the research support that of the literature in the field of change management and convergence, with some additional findings. There are so many factors to consider during a convergence project, and in the years after, that it requires strong vision and leadership if it is to succeed at all. There is an abundance of literature offering guidance and recommendations of good practice in regards to converging services but the primary research demonstrates that some organisations are struggling to make it successful and staff are resentful and anxious. The case study institution has experienced more success, with staff generally positive about the change and reporting a good degree of assimilation, however, it still has to work on overcoming some residual departmental silos to achieve cohesion across the teams.

6.3 Lessons learned and future research

Trying to define all the types of roles in a superconverged service for the purposes of the survey proved to be difficult. The researcher assumed that the term librarian would cover professionally qualified librarians working in any team; however, some of them put themselves in other categories or gave their title in the free text response box. The research process also highlighted some areas of ambiguity in terms of both the literature and the researcher's knowledge around the terminology

used in the study. It became clear through the survey and during interviews that participants struggled with the term cultural differences which was often used synonymously with the term conflict, although for the purposes of the research they meant different things. Some clarification on the part of the researcher was needed, whilst trying to ensure that the questions did not become leading.

Lessons learned during data collection included not letting another organisation know in time that only one library service would be a case study, and having to conduct a telephone interview with a keen participant that was not used in the final data collection. All interviews were intended to be transcribed verbatim but after transcribing the first one, which ran to 5500 words and took many hours, the researcher made the pragmatic decision to transcribe key points instead, leaving the concern that something important may be missed.

The research was exploratory in nature and covered many themes; however, one area of interest became apparent during the sampling stage; the number of organisations which have de-converged since writing fairly positive case studies on their convergence experience. Research into this area may shed more light on the challenges facing organisations going down the route of superconvergence.

15,519 words

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Appendix A: Sampling plan

Library	computing service structure	A1	MIS	Phones	AVS/ Med	Inst. web	Mus/ gal/ arc	L & T	VLE	Inst. Rep.	Student support services	Copy-right	Records mgmt.	Oth	No
57 GLOS	Separate														
58 GLYN	Separate														
59 GOLD	Separate														
60 GRCH	Merged														
61 GSMD	No return														
62 HAU	Separate														
63 HW	Merged														
64 HERT	Merged														
65 HEY	Separate														
66 HUD	Merged														
67 HULL	Separate														
68 IC	Separate														
69 ICR	No return														
70 IOE	Separate														
71 KEEL	Separate														
72 KENT	Merged														
73 KCL	Separate														
74 KSTN	Separate														
75 LANC	Separate														
76 LEED	Separate														
77 LMU	Separate														
78 LCM	Separate														
79 LEIC	Separate														
80 LINC	Separate														
81 LIV	Separate														
82 LVHU	Separate														
83 LJMU	Merged														
85 UCL	Separate														
86 ULON	No return														
87 LBS	Joint mg't														
87.5 LCDS	No return														
88 LMET	Separate														
89 LSHT	Separate														
90 LSE	Separate														
91 SBU	Other														
92 LBRO	Separate														
93 UMAN	Separate														
94 MMU	Separate														
95 MDX	Merged														
96 NCL	Separate														
97 NEWM	Separate														

Appendix B: Survey schedule

Section 1 - About you

1. Choose the description which best fits your role:

Librarian

Paraprofessional support – e.g. cataloguing

IT support

Academic /study skills support

Career support

Counselling/pastoral support

Student services – e.g. administration

Learning technologist e.g. VLE and online curriculum support

Customer service support

Additional needs support

Other – (please specify)

Section 2 - About your organisation

2. How long has your service been superconverged?

0-2 years

2-5 years

5-8 years

8 years or more

3. Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

3 a) I understand the mission, vision and objectives of the superconverged service

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

3 b) I understand how my work contributes to the achievement of the superconverged service:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Section 3 - Communication

4. Please rate how effective current communication processes are at conveying the following types of information to you:

4 a) Strategic, i.e. strategic plan, annual report

Very good

Good

Average

Poor

Very poor

4 b) Senior Management Team i.e. decisions and directions

4 c) Your team's role and objectives

4 d) Your individual role and responsibilities

4 e) Policies and procedures

4 f) Daily updates e.g. staff or service changes

4 g) Problems e.g. systems going down

4 h) News and initiatives

5 i) Staff development news

5. Is information from other teams in the service shared effectively with you?

Yes – always

Yes – most of the time

Sometimes

Rarely

Section 4 - Conflict

7. Does your team experience conflict with other teams in the service?

Yes – always

Yes – most of the time

Not sure

Sometimes

Rarely

If you have answered yes or sometimes – Please describe what kinds of conflict occur (If you have answered no, please go on to Q9)

Section 5 - Collaboration

8. Does your service have procedures in place to encourage cross-team working?

Yes

No

Don't know

9. Have you voluntarily worked with members of other teams to meet the service's objectives, e.g. delivering information literacy skills sessions or improving services?

Yes – often

Yes – sometimes

Rarely

Never

10. If you have voluntarily worked with others, in what ways have you done so?

Open text

11. Is there anything else you would like to mention about working in a superconverged service?

Open text

Appendix C: Email invitation to Heads of Service

Dear

I am hoping you can help me. I am a Masters student at Aberystwyth and am conducting some research on staff perceptions and attributes to 'superconverged' library services.

I understand that your service is responsible for the library, IT, the institutional repository and VLE, along with other services. This type of superconverged service is a growing phenomenon and I am interested to understand how communication, conflict and collaboration are perceived and experienced by staff delivering the service, as opposed to those responsible for implementation. Most of the literature is from a management perspective or only from the view of library and IT staff.

Would it be possible to send the text and link out below to all staff in your service, who are not classed as Senior Management Team, and encourage them to complete it? I am aware that staff may feel awkward answering questions of this nature and can assure both you and the respondents of complete anonymity. For this reason, I have given all the information up front so they can decide to undertake the survey without clicking through to it.

Please do let me know if this is possible.

Appendix D: Email invitation to participate in research

My name is Charlotte Heppell and I am a Master's student at Aberystwyth University, studying an MScEcon in Managing Libraries and Information Services. As part of my course, I am undertaking a research project under the supervision of Judith Broady-Preston. This project is investigating superconverged information services which incorporate a multitude of student support, such as: library, IT, academic skills, the VLE etc.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to help me in this research, by completing the survey in the link below which should take about 10-15 minutes of your time.

<https://aber.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/superconvergence-in-academic-libraries-an-exploration-of>

Before you decide whether or not to complete the survey, it is important that you understand:

- a) why the research is being done
- b) what it will involve

Please take time to read the following information carefully. If any of the information below is unclear or if you would like more information about this research project and what it involves, then please contact me (my contact details are listed at the end of this letter).

All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential (details about how this will be done are included in Part 2 of this letter).

Part 1 Why am I doing this research project: what is its purpose?

The title of this project is *Superconvergence in Academic Libraries: An Exploration of Communication, Conflict and Collaboration*.

Superconvergence has been a phenomenon which has developed in recent years. Most superconvergence comes out of a top-down directive aimed at saving money and a desire to join together different departments to further the shared mission of supporting teaching, learning and enquiry. Superconvergence often brings together IT and library services, study support, learning technologies, research support and other departments such as career support; however this is not exhaustive and there are many different versions of superconvergence. Superconverged services tend to be brought together under the auspices of an existing library director or equivalent and merge established teams, often into a shared building.

I am conducting this research in order to gather the thoughts and experiences of staff working at grass roots level in superconverged services. I hope that the results of this research will inform implementation of superconvergence for organisations going down this route in the future.

Part 2 What does the study involve?

Your organization has been contacted because it is listed in the SCONUL 2013-2014 Annual Report as meeting the criteria for a superconverged service.

My research will take the form of an online survey, followed up by some focus groups in agreeable organisations.

Before you complete the survey, please note the following procedures about this study:

1. **Duration:** Completing the survey should take about 10-15 minutes of your time.
2. **Confidentiality:** All the information you give will be treated confidentially. Both the *conversation* and the *information* you provide will be completely confidential and treated confidentially by the interviewer/researcher.
3. **Anonymity:** Information from the follow-up focus groups will be anonymous and personal data removed at the transcription stage. No individuals will be identified in our results. Any direct quotes included in the report (that is, quotes of the things recorded in the survey or focus groups), will be used selectively and anonymously (that is, no one will be able to attribute/link the words to you).
4. **Data security:** The data collected will be kept securely, and for only as long as necessary to: a) analyse the research data and b) report on the research and its findings.
5. A full report and a summary of the research findings will be available via Aberystwyth University's research repository CADAIR. The finished project may also be used in further communications, such as a journal article.
6. **Consent:** If you complete and return the survey, then I will assume that you have given your consent to take part in this study. That is:
 - i. you have read and understood the information in this letter about the study.
 - ii. you can contact me (via my contact details listed below) if you have any questions or concerns about the survey or the study.
 - iii. you understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any.
 - iv. you understand that your responses will be treated confidentially and in confidence by the researcher.
 - v. you understand that your responses will be treated anonymously.
 - vi. you allow me to use your direct quotes (that is, statements you might write on the survey) in anonymised in the study's report/write-up and related communications.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Appendix E: Email regarding concerns from participants

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2015 09:38
To: Heppell, Charlotte; [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Interviews :)

Hi. Are these going to be interviews or focus groups? Several of the team were worried about sharing in a focus group setting and said they wouldn't be open, because of other people in the room [REDACTED] also said you didn't want [REDACTED] involved because you wanted a grass roots view. [REDACTED] initially offered, but she spoke to me yesterday and was worried that she might say something that could be traced back to her or other people (in a focus group) would know she'd said it. I think people were concerned about their anonymity.

[REDACTED] said she would help (but again, said she wouldn't speak openly in a focus group), but [REDACTED] on leave next week.

Appendix F: Sample coding and quote extraction for thematic analysis

So, you've talked there about ways you disseminate information from your team, have there ever been any problems, I just want to probe this a bit more, perhaps with other teams saying what they need to say to your team?

Is this within the department or from outside?

Within the department

Yes, erm, from the [redacted] it would be, I have to be honest, they stick out the most, What they do is usually important and very useful for the university, erm, I do feel it's a bit of a silo within the department, erm, and that's the team we struggle with the most. One of the main reasons; you don't see a lot of them, erm, I know who they all are, I come across them perhaps more often than customer services assistants and it's difficult with referrals at times, if you are not quite sure, who's who and what they actually do. Erm, it's a case of educating your staff of course but when you've got a team like that which erm, as I said, is a bit of a silo, it's difficult to explain to your own team exactly what they are all doing. Erm, and then information that is passed out from them, if they remember, which they're quite good at, to inform the right audience, is then to understand what they are actually talking about. Erm, cos it can be quite technical at times and it might also be, again, going back to your other question, is it actually relevant? Did it need to go out to everybody, cos are people thinking I don't actually understand and I'm not sure what that team do anyway, so I'll just forget about it. Err, but that's the biggest problem, cos they do a specific thing, you can pretty much, if you worked in a library for any length of time, you know what a librarian does, arguably, or what the resource management team do, you know they're looking at, again, the resources and putting the resources out and all that sort of business, and [redacted] here at [redacted], that's quite straightforward as well, in terms of what service they're offering. And the [redacted] team it never has been, and they're struggling to come across as transparent as perhaps they need to.

How do you feel about your voice being heard in the department?

Erm, my manger listens and will discuss things whether it's agreement or whether she doesn't agree. That doesn't then form an argument, that's never happened; which I suppose is a good relationship between a manager and a subordinate. Erm, [redacted] is open, erm, to being the head of the department. I've never felt uncomfortable with bypassing and going directly to [redacted] if there's an issue that needs to be dealt with and, again, he'll listen and discuss, you easily set out a plan should anything need to happen. That's good to know as

Comment [HC5]: Quote on silo/cultural differences

Comment [HC6]: Quote

Comment [HC7]: Communication issues around technological language

Comment [HC8]: Quote on communication issues around who receives what and why?

Comment [HC9]: Understanding of historical roles

Comment [HC10]: Quote

Comment [HC11]: Sense of hierarchy

Appendix G: Interview consent form

Consent form

Title of project: *Superconvergence in Academic Libraries: An Exploration of Communication, Conflict and Collaboration*

Name of student/researcher: Charlotte Heppell

Project authority: This research project is being undertaken as part of a Master's in Managing Libraries and Information Services from Aberystwyth University

- | | Please tick |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have had the opportunity to consider this information and ask questions about it and have had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree that the data I provide may be used by Charlotte Heppell within the conditions outlined in the Information Letter. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to the use of any anonymised direct quotes in the report. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant	Signature	Date
Name of researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix H: Interview schedule

Interview schedule

About you

1. Could you tell me your title and what you do in the organisation?

Communication

2. How do your daily tasks match with your job description/your expected role?
3. Could you tell me about your experiences of top down communication from senior management?
4. Could you tell me about your experiences of communication between the teams in your department?
5. How do you feel about your voice being heard in your department?

Conflict

6. What kinds of conflict/tensions between teams have you experienced, if there is any conflict/tension?
7. If conflict is experienced between teams, in what ways is it dealt with?

Work pressure

8. What kinds of pressures do you work under, if any?

Culture

9. Can you tell me about any cultural differences between the teams, if there are any?

Collaboration

10. Tell me about your experiences of team collaboration (formal and informal – the good, the bad and the ugly)

Training and development

11. How confident do you feel in carrying out your role competently?